ONLY THE PERVERSE FANTASY CAN STILL SAVE US

NANCY SPECTOR

PART I | Pre-Cycle

HYPERTROPHY (incline), 1991

Drawing Restraint II, 1988

THE FIELD

Matthew Barney's five-part *Cremaster* cycle is a self-enclosed aesthetic system. Born out of a performative practice in which the human body—with its psychic drives and physical thresholds—symbolizes the potential of sheer creative force, the cycle explodes this body into the particles of a contemporary creation myth. Since its inception in 1994, the *Cremaster* cycle has unfolded in time as well as space to render visible some of the processes by which form—in its biological, psychological, and geological states—comes to be. Barney's visual language is protean: drawing and film unite to engender photography and sculpture, which, in turn, produce more drawing and film, in an incestuous intermingling of materials that defies any hierarchy of artistic mediums. Driven by a narrative impulse, the iconography is multivalent and allusive. Objects and images, always striking, bizarre, and seductive, function simultaneously on various levels of meaning. Created out of sequence—*Cremaster 4* (1994) was realized first, then followed by *Cremasters 1* (1995), *5* (1997), *2* (1999), and *3* (2002)—the cycle has at least two sets of beginnings, at least two endings, and many more points of entry. It is a polymorphous organism of an artwork, continuously shifting guises and following its own eccentric set of rules, many of which Barney has employed since his earliest body-centric projects.

The first and perhaps most fundamental of these rules involves the proposition that form cannot materialize or mutate unless it struggles against resistance in the process. This idea developed out of Barney's own experience as an athlete, when he built strength and endurance by withstanding repetitive physical stress. The phenomenon of athletic training, in which the body strives to surpass threshold after threshold of corporeal limitation, plays a central role in the conceptual underpinnings of his work. So does the psychosocial dimension of organized sports, a ritualized realm of competition, exhibitionism, and idolization that is associated in our collective cultural unconscious with masculine identity. Barney premised his approach to the creation of form on the technique of hypertrophic muscle development, which involves the tearing down of tissue through repetitive stress in order to enlarge specific areas of the body. On the Nautilus machine one can isolate and exert virtually any individual voluntary muscle mass: adductor, biceps, flexor, gluteus maximus, pectoral, quadriceps, triceps, and so on. Barney's first artworks, made while he was still in college, were performance-based situations during which he applied this biological model to the practice of drawing. Conceived as studio experiments, the earliest of the *Drawing Restraint* series (1988–93) involved the use of physical resistance in an attempt to create that fundamental component of drawing, a graphic mark. In his obstacle course of a studio—which resembled some hybrid version of Gold's Gym and

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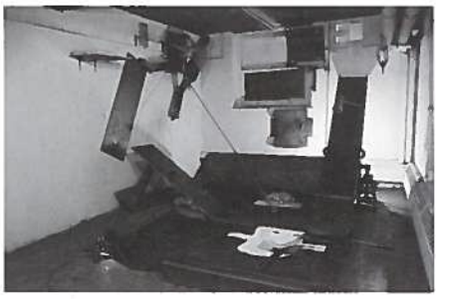
The title of this essay is a quote from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, which was used as an epigram by Rosemary Jackson in her book *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981). This quotation also appears as the epigram for Bryant Frazer's review of Jörg Buttgereit's cult horror films *Nekromantik* (1987) and *Nekromantik 2* (1991) featured on the Web site http://www.deep-focus.com/flicker/nekroma2.html. I have been unable to locate the actual source for this quote, however. Researchers at the Goethe Institut in New York believe it to be an erroneous citation (phone conservation, January 21, 2002). Nevertheless, the fact that *Nekromantik* is one of Barney's favorite zombie films adds a certain synchronicity to its presence here, despite my doubt about its source (Barney, conversation with the author, February 21, 2001). Its meaning in relation to Barney's art will, I hope, become clear in the pages that follow.

This essay has benefited from the helpful guidance of many colleagues. I would like to acknowledge Nat Trotman, Stephen Hoban, and Joan Young for their critical research assistance. Most important, I would like to thank my good friend and colleague Thyrza Nichols Goodeve, whose own innovative and profoundly insightful writings on Matthew Barney's work have been a constant source of inspiration.

an S/M fetish club—Barney climbed ramps, swung from rings, strained against tethers, jumped on a minitrampoline, and pushed blocking sleds in an effort to record the lines of a sketch, a self-portrait, a diagram. Employing tools that further complicated the process by their unwieldiness in scale, weight, or rigidity, he produced images that functioned both as indices of the energy expended to complete them and as representational markings.

Though evocative of 1970s Process art, which incorporated the act of making into the material presence of the finished work, Barney's *Drawing Restraint* project delves into more psychosexual sources that circulate around the libidinal aspects of expenditure.[1] Strenuous athletic competition requires the suppression of any drives extraneous to the goal of winning. Sexual desire, the quest for socialization, and other appetites must be sublimated in order for the body to operate at peak performance level. For Barney the game itself is of lesser interest than the accumulation, storage, and release of energy in this controlled corporeal environment. His art contemplates the potential of "creative repression" to define new "internal thresholds," new inner processes by which force may be harnessed and form generated.[2] It also acknowledges how the eroticism inherent in sport—with its emphasis on bodily perfection, its struggle between opposing parties, its exertion, its sweat—invokes the fact that desire, like the exhausted muscle, grows when subjected to self-imposed restraint. The Marquis de Sade, ever the expert on the relationship between conflict and sexual pleasure, articulated this in his introduction to *120 Days of Sodom*: "There is nothing," he explained, "that can set bounds to licentiousness. . . . The best way of enlarging and multiplying one's desires is to try and limit them."[3]

As part of his early work Barney identified a three-part internal system that processes the ebb and flow of different energies in the body, moving from desire to discipline to productivity.[4] The first zone or level, which he labeled "Situation," contains pure raw drive. In this state the energy is unorganized and essentially useless, but definitely sexual and ripe with potential. In a drawing of the fetal reproductive system prior to the process of sexual differentiation, Barney rendered this zone of possibility visible through the metaphor of embryonic development. For the first six weeks after conception, embryos of both XX and XY varieties hover in a gender-neutral condition; growth buds called anlagen wait inertly for sex chromosomes to trigger their inexorable division into male or female states. When so catalyzed, a pair of undifferentiated gonads develop into either ovaries or testicles. Sets of internal ducts, either wolffian or mullerian, become seminal vesicles or fallopian tubes respectively, and the genital tubercule—a minute protruding nub of tissue—grows into either clitoris or penis. As anatomical destiny is realized, the different sex hormones—estrogen, progesterone, and androgen—are activated to



Drawing Restraint II, 1988

Drawing Restraint II (document), 1988 (detail)

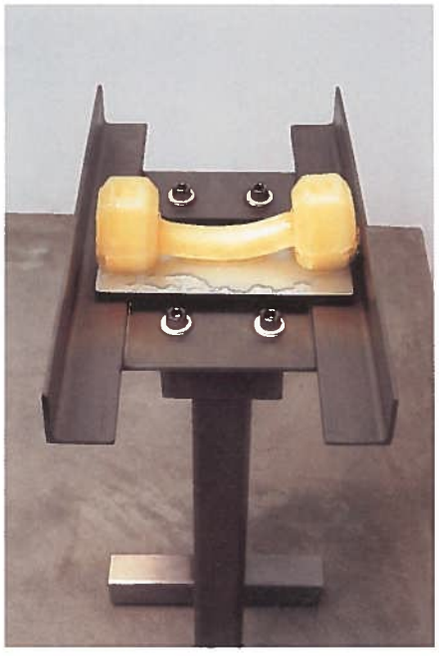
1. Process art—specifically Richard Serra's early work, with its emphasis on physicality and materiality—was an important source for Barney's initial sculptural investigations.

2. Barney, in an interview with Glen Helfand, "Matthew Barney," *Shift 14* 6, no. 2 (1992), p. 38. "The work," Barney goes on, "has to do with the suspension of competition, or spending stored potential that has built up. That can be taken on several layers—the sexual layer of spending the libido, athletic notions. People have these strange rituals of repression during game season."

3. Marquis de Sade, quoted in Georges Bataille, *Eroticism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1986), p. 48. Neville Wakefield has referred to the Sadean dimensions of Barney's interest in psychological and physical restraint; see his article "Matthew Barney's Fornication with the Fabric of Space," *Parkett*, no. 39 (March 1994), pp. 118–24.

4. Barney discusses this system in his interview with Jérôme Sans, "Matthew Barney: Modern Heroes," *Art Press*, no. 204 (July–August 1995), p. 26: "What I ended up doing was trying to locate different areas inside of myself where different energies were. And I thought that if a diagram could be made in an attempt to locate them, and even if they continued to move, then I could always locate them." He also mentions it in the interview "Travels in Hypertrophia: Thyrza Nichols Goodeve Talks with Matthew Barney," *Artforum* 33, no. 9 (May 1995), p. 117. And he described this three-part diagram as central to the themes of his work during a lecture at the 92nd Street Y, New York, on February 12, 1998.

Condition 88, 1988



unit BOLUS, 1991

perform both offensive and defensive functions: they promote development of certain gender-specific organs while guaranteeing the atrophy of others.[5] This momentary state of genital indeterminacy is emblematic for Barney; it functions in his work as a symbol for unadulterated potential, providing him with a metaphoric vocabulary with which to organize and describe his own aesthetic system.

"Condition," the second of Barney's interior zones, is a visceral "disciplinary funnel" that processes the body's crude energy.[6] Its anatomical analogue is the digestive tract. If phase one consists of creative but undirected force, then the second level manages this force with the goal of making it useful. Processed through the stomach and upper intestines, the raw energy is churned up, broken down, and distilled. Extending the metaphor of digestion, the third and final zone, "Production," makes this force manifest in the world via anal and oral channels.

Once Barney diagrammed this tripartite structure, he became interested in the idea of short-circuiting the entire system by skipping the Production stage. The internal matrix would then oscillate exclusively between Situation and Condition, between desire and discipline, in a never-ending, self-referential, autoerotic cycle. According to the artist, "If Production is bypassed . . . the head goes into the ass,"[7] and the form goes into a "tailspin."[8] Barney represented this concept in the sculpture *unit BOLUS* (1991), which, like much of his early work, fuses biomedical terminology with the trappings of the locker room. In physiological terms a bolus is a wad of ingested or digested food. Here it serves as the title for a cast-petroleum-jelly dumbbell maintained by a refrigerated rack. The artist described this inherently malleable, double-headed form as a "mouthpiece that could also be inserted anally," an action that would essentially "close the circle" and seal off the body in a hermetic, perfectly self-contained state.[9] In his video performance *FIELD DRESSING (orifill)* (1989), Barney emulated this condition by filling each of his body's orifices—ear, nose, mouth, anus, penis—with petroleum jelly. The strenuous repetitive action that produced this state required lowering himself from the ceiling wearing nothing but a harness, scooping the substance up from a trough on the floor, and inserting it into the desired aperture.

The self-enclosed organism—an instrument of narcissistic gratification—has its place in the history of art. It is manifest in Marcel Duchamp's *Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even* (1915–23), with its intimations of a ceaseless, mechanical masturbatory cycle. In the lower, bachelor-inhabited realm of the work, an elaborate automated system of interconnected parts—malic molds, chocolate grinder, sieves, scissors, rams, mirrors, oculist witnesses, glider—churns away, forever secluded from the realm of the bride above but defined in opposition to it. "The bachelor," according to Duchamp,

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5. For a detailed though dated account of sexual differentiation at the embryonic level, see John Money and Patricia Tucker, *Sexual Signatures: On Being a Man or a Woman* (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1975). The authors' description of prenatal development alludes to a state of inner conflict, one that humorously parallels Barney's concept of hypertrophic growth through restraint: "Your hormone mix steered you at the fork in the prenatal road where your embryonic internal genetic structures . . . found their destiny. One set of structures began to develop, the other to wither away. . . . It takes a male hormone mix to make the wolffian structures develop, and it takes that special temporary hormone called simply 'mullerian-inhibiting hormone,' which is secreted during this period by the testicles, to keep the mullerian structures from pursuing their ambition to become a uterus, fallopian tubes, and upper vagina. . . . Development as a male requires effective propulsion in the male direction at each critical stage" (pp. 46–47). On the sexism intrinsic to such accounts of sexual differentiation and gender development, which posits the male element as an active force and the female as passive, see Anne Fausto-Sterling, "How to Build a Man," in Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, and Simon Watson, eds., *Constructing Masculinity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 127–34.

6. Barney, lecture of February 12, 1998.

7. Barney, quoted in Goodeve, "Travels in Hypertrophia," p. 117.

8. Barney, quoted in the interview "Matthew Barney: A Conversation with Jeanne Siegel," *Tema Celeste*, no. 40 (spring 1993), p. 67.

9. Barney, lecture of February 12, 1998.

"grinds his chocolate himself."[10] This onanistic model, marked by a relentless erotic pulse, appears again and again in the trajectory of shared sensibilities (or obsessions) that extends from Duchamp to Barney. It resides in Vito Acconci's *Seedbed* (1972), a performance/sculpture in which the artist lurked underneath a false floor masturbating to the fantasy of those walking above him. It exists in early videotaped studio exercises of Bruce Nauman's, such as *Bouncing in the Corner II* (1969), in which the artist's incessantly repetitive actions serve to abstract his body into images of its own erogenous zones. And it informs Richard Serra's film *Hand Catching Lead* (1971), a meditation on process that shows the artist's hand attempting to grasp pieces of lead as they fall through the space of the frame. The continuous motion of Serra's opening and flexing grip is pulsatile, and this effect, like the performances of Acconci and Nauman, privileges a visceral cadence or intense corporeal friction over the pure, disembodied optics of modernist art.[11]

In Barney's onanistic universe, the body—which is always a sign for a more abstract operative structure—attempts to close in on itself through mechanisms of self-restraint. The will is thus regimented by an erotics of physical control that penetrates into the deepest recesses of the organism. If this pulsating cycle of desire and discipline repeats itself enough times, according to the artist, "Something that's really elusive can slip out—a form that *has* form, but isn't overdetermined."[12] At the very outset of his practice Barney created a graphic symbol for this concept of self-imposed resistance and the creative potential it harbors. His "field emblem"—an ellipsis bisected horizontally by a single bar—signifies the orifice and its closure, the hermetic body, an arena of possibility. The motif is ubiquitous in Barney's œuvre. Like a traditional heraldic emblem it encapsulates and translates the artist's complex symbology into visual shorthand. But the field emblem also functions like a corporate logo, ensuring a certain brand identity by virtue of its constant presence in the work. Mixing the archaic and the pop, this graphic image epitomizes Barney's unique aesthetic language, which is continuously evolving in its construction of a new-millennium mythology.

In addition to the anthropomorphic connotations of the field emblem, it also suggests an architectural framework, a "floor plan for actions," an empty stage on which the ritual preparations for self-mastery can be enacted.[13] At once body and stadium, the emblem represents an interstitial zone through which interior and exterior forces blend in a provocative mix of biology, activity, and edifice.[14] Barney's early sculptures and frames for drawings and photographs rehearse the permeable membrane between human and inhuman in their inclusion of (self-lubricating) Teflon and of metals such as titanium and stainless steel, which are used for external prosthetics and surgical implants.[15] These are substances that enter and extend the biogenetic body

Video stills from *FIELD DRESSING (orifill)*, 1989

10. In the copious notes accompanying this work, Marcel Duchamp discloses that the glider or chariot chants the following litanies: "Slow life/Vicious Circle/Onanism/Horizontal/Buffer of Life/Bachelor life regarded as an alternating rebounding on this buffer." Quoted in Richard Hamilton, *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even*, a facsimile of Duchamp's *Green Box*, trans. George Heard Hamilton (Stuttgart, London, and Reykjavik: Edition Hansjörg Mayer, 1976), n.p. The connection between Barney and Duchamp was first articulated by Stuart Morgan in "Of Goats and Men," *Frieze*, no. 6 (January–February 1995), pp. 34–38, where he wrote, "As in Duchamp, the self-sufficiency of the artist's fictive universe was paraded, changes of state were proposed and sexual definitions were blurred . . . and like that of Duchamp, Barney's sustaining myth involved sexuality, or the differences between male and female" (p. 35).

11. This idea and specific examples are indebted to Rosalind Krauss's reading of the antimodernist impulse in Duchamp's work in general and of his *Anémic Cinéma* (1925) in particular. Krauss has identified the erotic "pulse"—often manifest in time-based work—as the link between visuality, the body, and art, arguing that vision is inseparable from corporeality. "In its diastolic repetitiveness, [the pulse] associates itself with the density of nervous tissue, with its temporality of feedback, of response time, of retention and protension, of the fact that, without this temporal wave, no experience at all, visual or otherwise, could happen." See Yve-Alain Bois and Krauss, *Formless: A User's Guide* (New York: Zone Books, 1997), p. 135.

12. Barney, quoted in Goodeve, "Travels in Hypertrophia," p. 117.

13. Barney, lecture of February 12, 1998.

14. "This motif represents the orifice and its closure—

Video still from *BLIND PERINEUM*, 1991

into a cybernetic organism, fusing the evolved with the constructed, the living with the artificial. In some of his objects Barney even included speculums and sternal retractors—the actual devices used to open the body up to outside intervention/alteration/extension. In videotaped actions such as *MILE HIGH Threshold: FLIGHT with the ANAL SADISTIC WARRIOR* and *BLIND PERINEUM* (both 1991), the body is so expanded that it becomes the playing field itself. Conversely, the site of performance becomes a corporeal cavity that the artist must negotiate while dangling from the ceiling in a full-body harness.[16] He traverses its surface with titanium ice screws, which hang from his belt and penetrate his anus. Subtitled *Fornication with the Fabric of Space*, these climbs convert the pitch in which they occur into an eroticized anatomical interior.

With his simple diagram of the field emblem Barney libidinizes architectural space and the surrounding environs, which come to represent the externalization or materialization of inner drives. As in J. G. Ballard's novel *The Atrocity Exhibition* (in which a military weapons range transmogrifies into the visage of Elizabeth Taylor, and a multilevel parking garage embodies erotic compulsions in its morphological resemblance to female anatomy),[17] body becomes landscape, and landscape becomes body. The artist's efforts to map a somatic topography—or, inverting the metaphor, to dissect a geographical organism—will reveal yet another state of undifferentiation, in which all organic and inorganic matter is fused. These zones of potential, akin to the gender indeterminacy of the five-week-old embryo, will

or the body and its self-imposed restraint—and as the body explodes in scale, it forms the stadium and field that house the video actions." Barney, quoted in "Matthew Barney: A Conversation with Jeanne Siegel," p. 67.

15. "I started out," Barney has explained, "using prosthetic plastic as frames for drawings. The drawings became an internal space that a prosthetic orifice opened up to reveal. After that I started making frames that had speculums made from the same prosthetic material with the possibility that the orifice constructed its own speculum to open it wider so one could see deeper into this internal space." Barney, quoted in Sans, "Matthew Barney: Modern Heroes," p. 31.

16. In her brief but probing text on Barney's first public exhibition, held at the Stuart Regen Gallery, Los Angeles, in 1991, Leslie Dick brings a Lacanian reading to the artist's video-action *FLIGHT with the ANAL SADISTIC WARRIOR* that anthropomorphizes the architecture of the performance space: "The 'Mirror Stage' examines a moment when the infant, before language, has the mental capacity to (mis-)recognize itself in the mirror, yet lacks the gross motor skill to hold itself upright. It is held to the mirror by its mother, or stuck in an apparatus of support: a sling, a harness, a 'trotte-bébé.' Barney makes his way across the space of the gallery, naked, harnessed, inverted, dangling, displaying the rock-climbing equipment (hooks, ice screws) that hangs from his body like jewelry, enabling his ordeal. The architecture of the gallery itself becomes an exploded maternal body, a ceiling from which the muscular yet infantilized body hangs suspended." See Dick, "Matthew Barney," in Howard Singerman, ed., *Public Offerings*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, and New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001), pp. 20–21.

TRANSEXUALIS, 1991 (interior)

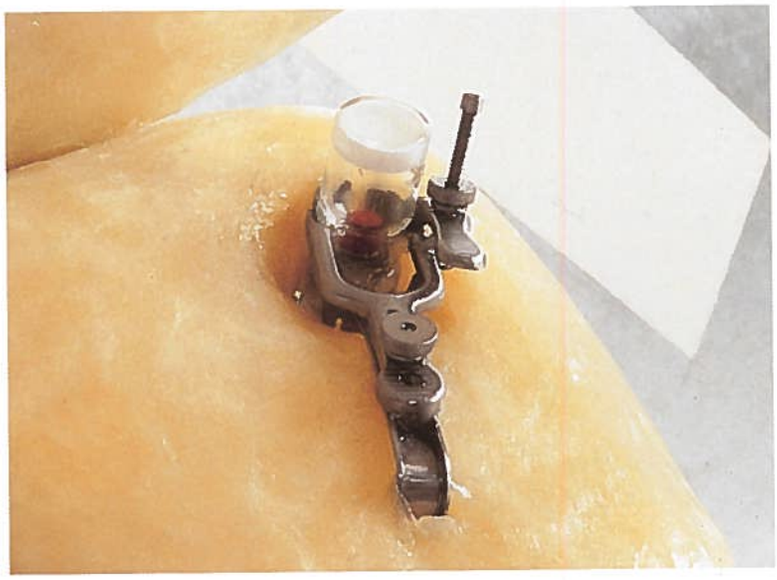
serve as the eccentric and mutating settings for Barney's epic *Cremaster* project. But before this cycle could find its form, Barney had to introduce conflict into the system.

THE HUBRIS PILL

Barney's early objects and installations imagine the perfectly engineered body. Well-equipped mise-en-scènes for the rituals of athletic training, they offer wrestling mats, curl bars, dumbbells, and weight-lifting benches as so many propositions for hypertrophic development. Metabolic substances such as sucrose, glucose, amino acids, and anabolic steroids—the core ingredients of living matter—serve as sculptural mediums. And like the molten lead that Serra used in *Casting* (1969), they stress preparation and process over the stasis of an inert artwork.

This is the arena in which the body is sculpted, where contenders for the ultimate physique subject themselves to extreme regimens of resistance training, doping their bodies on cocktails of painkillers and performance-enhancing stimulants that range from the standard but illegal anabolic or androgenic steroids to more bizarre chemical compounds. (For example, Naoko Takahashi of Japan, winner of the women's marathon at the 2000 Olympics, credits her stamina to drinking the stomach secretions of giant killer hornets.) Barney acknowledges this athletic will-to-power, this compulsion to achieve the humanly impossible within the very human confines of

17. For a discussion of J. G. Ballard's fusion of body and site in *The Atrocity Exhibition* (San Francisco: Re/Search Publications, 1990; 1970)—an important source for Barney—see Gregory Stephenson, *Out of the Night and into the Dream: A Thematic Study of the Fiction of J. G. Ballard* (New York, Westport, Conn., and London: Greenwood Press, 1991), p. 64.



TRANSEXUALIS (decline), 1991 (interior)

(right) *TRANSEXUALIS (decline)*, 1991 (detail)

the physical body. In each of the walk-in coolers of his twin *TRANSEXUALIS* installations (both 1991), he included—along with cast-petroleum-jelly exercise benches—human chorionic gonadotropin, a hormone found only in the urine of pregnant women. Secreted by the growing placenta shortly after implantation in the uterus, HCG ensures the viability of pregnancy by stopping ovulation and promoting hormone secretions in the growing embryo. Because exogenous HCG has characteristics almost identical to those of the luteinizing hormone (LH), which stimulates the fetal testes to produce testosterone, athletes use it to increase muscle mass and endurance.

Barney's inclusion of HCG in the refrigerated units of *TRANSEXUALIS* metaphorically transforms these arctic gymnasiums into wombs, uterine cavities where life itself is conceived and nurtured. This is Duchamp's bachelor-machine model metamorphosed into architecture. Entirely self-sufficient, these installation-cum-organisms propose the possibility of creation through parthenogenesis, a kind of virgin birth, elevating the human reproductive cycle to that of the gods.[18] Such autonomous procreation would signal the deification of man. But this is the realm of the impossible, the longed-for zone of omnipotence that, as a fantasy, drives the weight lifter and the bodybuilder to deny the reality of their flesh. It is the other side of the always receding performance wall that lures an athlete into attempting the suprahuman, whatever the risks.[19] The mad desire to become a deity on earth is pure hubris, a disease of the soul that afflicts the most ambitious, creative, and inquisitive.[20] It is the power that surges through the hypertrophic body,

18. The myth of the bachelor machine has other art-historical precedents besides Duchamp, including, in particular, Dada and Surrealist art such as Francis Picabia's *Girl Born Without a Mother* (ca. 1916–18) and Max Ernst's *Self-Constructed Small Machine* (1919). For an analysis of this literary and aesthetic trope, see my essay "Neither Bachelors nor Brides: The Hybrid Machines of Rebecca Horn," in *Rebecca Horn*, exh. cat. (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 1993), pp. 54–67.

19. Professional bodybuilders, who are cited here as a paradigm for all extreme-sport aficionados, are inherently outlaws, for their practice depends on the use of steroids, which, according to the Anabolic Steroids Control Act of 1991, are illegal unless prescribed for medicinal purposes. Steroid abuse can be lethal, but for the bodybuilder the benefits apparently outweigh the dangers. Here is one devotee's paean to the sport: "Bodybuilders are their own test pilots, breaking the bonds of gravity, stretching their own envelope, the human frame, piercing the ceiling and propelling onward into the etherized air above to the great beyond. The danger is the allure. How much are you willing to suffer to achieve your aims? Like rocket-fuel-powered drag racers, solo sailors and speed skiers, they run a fine line between bravery and bravado, fearlessness and folly." Sam Fussell, "Bodybuilder Americanus," in Laurence Goldstein, ed., *The Male Body: Features, Destinies, Exposures* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), pp. 49–50.

20. For an insightful and beautifully crafted discussion of hubris in relation to Barney's work, particularly his *Drawing Restraint 7* (1993), see Neville Wakefield's untitled essay in *Matthew Barney: PACE CAR for the HUBRIS PILL*, exh. cat. (Rotterdam: Museum Boymans-van-Beuningen, 1995), pp. 15–19.

the psychic drive behind the excess of extreme self-discipline. And it finds form in Barney's sculptural imagination in the shape of a pill: *Anabol [A]: PACE CAR FOR THE HUBRIS PILL* (1991).

Whether steroid, hormone, or placebo, the hubris pill is a catalyst for conflict.[21] As an excess of pride, a rebellion against the natural order of things, hubris always begets retribution. This is its curse. The gods of ancient Greece routinely smote those who aspired to their ranks, lusted after their paramours, or challenged their authority. Barney's *Drawing Restraint 7* (1993)—a deadly tournament between two satyrs attempting to create form in the back of a moving limousine—recalls this memory of defiance and its punishment. This is the myth of Marsyas, the woodland satyr who dared to play the music of the gods and was flayed for his trespasses. In Barney's retelling of the legend, a third, much less developed, hybrid creature futilely chases his own tail in the front of the vehicle. Attempting to complete the circle, to close off and complete his own form, the "kid" pursues the intangible space of hubris, the elusive sphere of immortality on earth. In Barney's cosmology the hubris pill is a reminder of the seductive danger of these anabolic dreams.

If the hypertrophic quest were ever fully realized—if the organism should attain a purely hermetic state—that would be the end of the story. In fact there would *be* no story. This state of nothingness, a void approaching that of the Lacanian Real, is the true horror of hubristic yearning for omnipotence. As the artist himself has said, "With a particular type of horror, you can really fit your head up your ass—turn yourself inside out to form a kind of visceral landscape—where you can chase the demons around."[22] Barney's art tests the edge of this void but never succumbs to the fall. It remains emphatically narrative, rehearsing process instead of completion, confronting the inner conflicts experienced by an organism in search of psychic and physiological transcendence. These elusive interior forces are manifest materially in the work as separate characters who represent different facets of the same drives. In the first cycle of projects constituting Barney's early work—which begins with *The Jim Otto Suite* (1991), courses through *[facility of INCLINE]* (1991), *OTTOshaft* (1992), and *[facility of DECLINE]* (1991), and ends with *RADIAL DRILL* (1991)—the conflict is personified in the figures of Harry Houdini and Jim Otto.[23] As individuals who have captured the artist's imagination, both of them embody the athletic paradigm, but to divergent ends.

Escape artist extraordinaire, Houdini symbolizes hermetic practices; he is the "Character of Positive Restraint" who refuses differentiation, seeking instead to seal off and transform his body through extreme discipline. In reality, Houdini's metamorphoses—escapes from locked trunks, jail cells, handcuffs, and the like—were the result of rigorous physical preparation coupled

HYPOTHERMAL PENETRATOR, 1991

21. Barney has described the hubris pill as "a glucose tablet, a kind of placebo in this narrative that's full of binary relationships between something like a placebo and steroids, between differentiated form and undifferentiated form, between the state of hubris and a state that sits just on the other side of the threshold, some omnipotent, heightened state that comes out of this hermetic state of understanding." Quoted in an interview with Jonathan Romney, "Matthew Barney," *Transcript* 3, no. 3 (1999), p. 99.

22. Barney, quoted in "Matthew Barney: A Conversation with Jeanne Siegel," p. 67. Richard Flood recounts a scene from one of Barney's favorite films, *Society* (Brian Yuza, 1989), in which "the protagonist shoves his fist up the antagonist's anus, grabs his head, pulls it into the body and out through his ass." See Flood, "Notes on Digestion and Film," in *PACE CAR for the HUBRIS PILL*, p. 30.

23. Like Barney's *Cremaster* cycle, this series of works was created out of order.

Video still from *MILE HIGH Threshold: FLIGHT with the ANAL SADISTIC WARRIOR*, 1991

with an intuitive understanding of the forms that would shackle him. Barney often cites the claim that Houdini could pick locks that had yet to be invented by anticipating and then ingesting their mechanisms through his finely tuned instincts.[24] Jim Otto, the legendary center for the Oakland Raiders who finished his fifteen-year career with two artificial knees, is for Barney an inverted mirror to Houdini: though equally fanatical about his métier, and as seemingly immune to pain, he is open, extroverted, theatrical. If Houdini operates through internalization, Otto—whom Barney describes as the "hypothermal penetrator"—achieves through outward aggression. A celebrated offensive player, Otto exulted in the field of competition. His relevance to Barney's narrative system, however, is primarily pictorial: the double-zero insignia on his football uniform suggests a twin orifice, a "roving rectum," a body susceptible to mutation, penetration, and differentiation.

Otto and Houdini are two incarnations of an internal horizon that arcs toward hubris. The outward-looking Otto seeks to consume or incorporate what is separate from him in a mad fusion with the universe. His foil, the introspective Houdini, strives for omnipotence through the exercise of sheer will. They enter into combat over which direction the organism will take. Struggle ensues and the narrative unfolds. These characters, as two mutations of the will, function like a system of checks and balances. Their internal struggle maintains the system by holding it taut between implosion and explosion. The *TRANSEXUALIS* project, with its related video actions, *MILE HIGH Threshold: FLIGHT with the ANAL SADISTIC WARRIOR* and *BLIND PERINEUM*, is essentially one protracted chase scene between Otto and the Character of Positive Restraint (Houdini). As the action begins, the Character of Positive Restraint, played by Barney, is attempting to fill in his nemesis' dual zeros before lacing together his own anus and mouth with a synthetic cord and the titanium ice screws used for his climb. It is once again the metaphor of prenatal development that provides the artist with his vocabulary: the battle between Otto and Houdini circulates around the notion of an embryo's inevitable drift toward differentiation. Each character has a different relationship to this process and, thus, a different set of desires. In Freudian terms these might be defined as the pleasure principle versus the reality principle. Barney represents the path of anatomical differentiation through a metaphoric device that involves fluctuating temperatures and their effect on the (male) body. Otto, for instance, is particularly sensitive to climatic change, since he is an entity pervaded by orifices (hence, the different temperatures in the walk-in coolers of *TRANSEXUALIS*, the colder of which was meant to disable him).

In the bioscape of Barney's art temperature change invokes the ascension or descension of the testicles, a normal biological function governed by the

24. For Barney on Houdini, see Helfand, "Matthew Barney," p. 38; Sans, "Matthew Barney: Modern Heroes," p. 28; and Goodeve, "Travels in Hypertrophia," p. 68. Houdini's self-discipline was extraordinary. One example may suffice: "Houdini disciplined himself to endure cold water and to hold his breath while submerged. Getting up at seven in the morning, he headed straight for the bath. . . . There he subjected himself to ever colder water and ever longer submersion. He chilled the bathwater with ice, bringing its temperature down, in one trial or another, to fifty-two, fifty-one, forty-nine, forty-eight degrees (when a doctor stopped him); several times down to forty-five; and at least twice down to thirty-six degrees, barely above freezing. After a while he got used to being bone cold. . . . Houdini also practiced staying immersed in the tub . . . [and] occasionally at least, he combined the two grueling exercises. He would then practice staying underwater in an ice bath. Once he held out for thirty-eight seconds." Kenneth Silverman, *Houdini!!!: The Career of Ehrich Weiss* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1996), p. 112.

cremaster muscle. This action of suspension or retraction protects the male reproductive system—in particular the production and maintenance of sperm—by regulating testicular temperature. Since live sperm need air-conditioning for survival, the testicles normally hang freely in the scrotum. But when it is too cold (or the subject experiences fear), the testicles are drawn upward into the warmer climes of the body. Though still unnamed as such in Barney's metaphoric universe, the cremaster muscle and its effects operate as a symbol in his earliest works.[25] The character he plays in *FIELD DRESSING (orifill)*, for instance, descends from the heated zone of the ceiling to the refrigerated vessel of petroleum jelly below, which is sculpted in the shape of the field emblem. After filling each orifice, he retracts to the ceiling before beginning the process anew. Here the performing body transmutes into its "part object"—human being to testicle, gestalt to sex organ—in a chain of signification that reveals the permeability of meaning itself.[26]

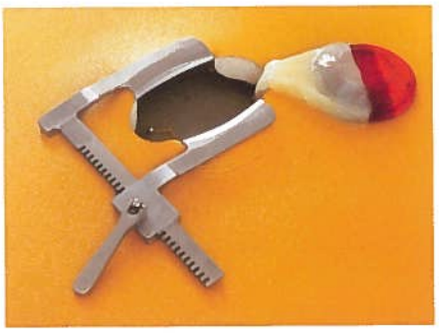
Testicular migration and its role in prenatal sexual differentiation may well be the ur-symbol of Barney's entire conceptual practice. The downward developmental slide of the testes into the awaiting scrotal sac, which occurs during the seventh month of fetal growth, is in many ways the final somatic stage in the making of a man. It is not the conclusion of this embryonic evolution, however, that is of foremost interest to the artist, even though his references to male anatomy may seem to suggest otherwise. Rather, it is the path traveled between the states of ascension (female) and descension (male)—and all the possible detours that can occur along the way—that activates and organizes Barney's mythological system. Strict gender binarism is but a modern invention dating from the late eighteenth century, when the "one-sex" model, premised on ancient beliefs in the essential sameness of the male and female reproductive systems, was discredited. Until that time, woman was perceived as an inversion of man. But over the next century the concept of one male paradigm from which all variation flowed gave way to a system of stark contrast and conflict, a development that coincided with the emergence of psychoanalysis and its fundamental fracture between genders and generations.[27] Today, however, the picture is more complex. In recognition of the many biological gradations between female and male that result from chromosomal hybridization, biologist and gender theorist Anne Fausto-Sterling identifies five different sexes: males, females, hermaphrodites (one testis and one ovary), male pseudo-hermaphrodites (testes and some aspects of the female genitalia but no ovaries), and female pseudo-hermaphrodites (ovaries and some aspects of the male genitalia but no testes).[28] Modern medical science may have routinely used surgical intervention to "fix" unruly bodies, seeking to eradicate any sexual variation that does not conform to the conventional, heterosexually oriented, binary

25. Barney has spoken about how his interest in body temperature dovetailed with his discovery of the function of the cremaster muscle: "Well, it's an interesting thing that happens in the way that the [cremaster muscle] responds to temperature or fear, and around that time [I found out about it], I was making these pieces which dealt with temperature—walk-in refrigerators in which Vaseline was cast in a particular form that was held in place by temperature. I was also thinking a lot more at that point about the kind of stories that nearly take place in the body, the kind of action films that were going on inside a body or an abstracted body." Quoted in Amy Jean Porter, "Fluid Talk: A Conversation with Matthew Barney," *Circa*, no. 22 (summer 2000), pp. 30–31.

26. See Bois and Krauss on the "Part Object" in *Formless*, pp. 152–61, for a discussion of its function in Surrealist art and literature to destabilize meaning.

27. For a detailed historical analysis of the "one-sex" model and its replacement in the modern age by sexual dimorphism, see Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1990). Also citing this source, Wakefield describes the organizing principle of Barney's work as both "pre-modern and post-analytical"; see "Matthew Barney's Fornication with the Fabric of Space," p. 123.

28. Anne Fausto-Sterling, "How Many Sexes Are There?" *New York Times*, March 12, 1993, p. A29.



REPRESSIA, 1991 (detail)

(right) Installation view of *[facility of INCLINE]* showing *REPRESSIA*, 1991

classification system, but the recognition and acceptance of intersexed people is gaining currency.

Gender mutability has a key narrative function in Barney's art, but it is not subject matter in itself. The artist acknowledged early on that "the ratios of sexuality seem to be changing, [and] that's where I think it entered my work. There's a proposed organism . . . that at certain points has a gender, but it's not necessarily a human gender. It has a ratio that fluctuates, 1:10, 2:9, wherever it ends up. Obviously there are articulations that are specifically masculine and feminine, but I think there's a lot of space in between that has to do with other points on the graph."[29] Gender is raw material for Barney. He molds it much as he molds space. The feminine and the masculine, or some combination thereof, become zones of articulation within the narrative. In *MILE HIGH Threshold: FLIGHT with the ANAL SADISTIC WARRIOR* Barney's Character of Positive Restraint propels himself through a space demarcated by fluctuating temperatures and shifting sexual morphologies, areas that function as units of concealment or hunting-blind-like traps. During the *[facility of INCLINE]* version of the *TRANSEXUALIS* project, which took place in Los Angeles at the Stuart Regen Gallery, the Character of Positive Restraint moves through the Masculine Jim Blind, which is signified by a drop in temperature intended to disable Otto. Leaving the domain of *TRANSEXUALIS*, he encounters the Androgynous Jim Blind, which is manifest as an architectural detail: a skylight and gate represented by the *case BOLUS* (1989–91) sculpture. He then drops from the ceiling onto the field of *REPRESSIA* (1991), represented by a

29. Helfand, "Matthew Barney," p. 38. Though much has been made of the transgressive and liberatory possibilities of an undifferentiated "third sex" in relationship to Barney's work, the politics of gender binarism are not critically important to the artist. Like sports, anatomy, and genre, sexual difference is merely one among many narrative vehicles or filters through which Barney explores the creation of form. See in particular Jerry Saltz, "The Next Sex," *Art in America* 84, no. 10 (October 1996), pp. 82–91. Barney himself has said, "I'm less interested in the external debate about gender, which I don't think my work is about. It's more about the endless possibilities this organism can take on, the fact that it can occupy a field that is designated as feminine or masculine or androgynous, but I'm not more interested in one than another." Quoted in Sans, "Matthew Barney: Modern Heroes," p. 28.

yellow wrestling mat punctured by an orifice, where he enters the Feminine Jim Blind by donning a costume: a West Coast, Lana Turner–like, poolside number. As documented in the video *DELAY OF GAME* (1991), the Character of Positive Restraint appears in drag as camouflage to hide from Otto, who tries to engage her in competition by offering her a "snap." This football maneuver—in which the center flips the ball backward between his legs to the quarterback—is rendered in Barney's symbolic system by the exchange of a cultured pearl. Otto hands the pearl to his disguised opponent, who rejects the snap by dropping the gem into an incision on the mat held open by a sternal retractor. In the *[facility of DECLINE]* version, performed in the Barbara Gladstone Gallery in New York, the Character of Positive Restraint undergoes similar transformations, only here she disguises herself in elegant evening wear, as shown in the video *RADIAL DRILL* (1991).

Before Barney expanded the biological model of differentiation outward to encompass the five-part organism he calls the *Cremaster* cycle, Otto and Houdini played one more round in *OTTOshaft*, a three-channel video installation that in many ways augured this extensive project. Staged, filmed, and initially exhibited in an empty underground parking garage in Kassel, Germany, as part of the *Documenta IX* exhibition in 1992, this performative sculpture (or sculptural performance) extended Barney's then-signature mode of presentation. As had been the case with his *FIELD DRESSING* and *TRANSEXUALIS* exhibitions, previously recorded actions played on video monitors in the environment where they had originally taken place, like an echo or memory of what had transpired. "I always think of those videos," the artist once explained, "as only a possible narrative of what might have happened in that space; rather than being truths, they're proposals."[30] The sculptural elements used in the video appeared in proximity to the monitors to concretize the action and give form to its propositional function. More so than in the earlier video actions, the setting of *OTTOshaft* became a character unto itself: the garage's glass-topped elevator shaft and low-ceilinged concrete ramps, the clinical-white tiles of an underpass, and three other elevator shafts dispersed throughout the *Documenta* site transmuted into the portals and channels of a body awaiting entry and passage as well as the bag, chanter, and drones of an environmental bagpipe. The cold, white, ever-nocturnal light of the underground space had its own menacing temperament, making the garage a "vessel that holds the psychology" of the piece.[31] This intensification of the role of location in the work's dramatic flow reflected Barney's growing interest in establishing nonhierarchical relationships between place and protagonist in his increasingly narrative projects. He was inspired at the time by horror films, such as Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* (1980), in which the setting, the Overlook Hotel—an empty off-season resort in the Colorado

DELAY OF GAME (manual A), 1991 (detail)

Production photo from *RADIAL DRILL*, 1991 (detail)

30. Barney, quoted in Goodeve, "Travels in Hypertrophia," p. 68.

31. When asked what the most memorable scene in film was for him, Barney replied, "Maybe when the lightbulbs start bleeding in [Sam Raimi's] *Evil Dead II* [1987]—it's a real classic, cabin-in-the-woods horror film. That would be very influential to me in the sense that the evil lives in the architecture rather than the person. Even if there is some antagonist circumnavigating the cabin, it's the cabin which is still the vessel that holds the psychology." Quoted in Porter, "Fluid Talk," p. 31.

Video stills from *OTTOshaft*, 1992

Rockies—is the very embodiment of evil. Imbued with psychic and somatic dimensions, the architecture is the film's main character.[32]

With the sterile, incubator-like garage urging them on, Otto and the Character of Positive Restraint plot to hijack the hubris pill and force it to achieve its most distant horizon of possibility, which is imagined in the form of a bagpipe. Taking the pill hostage, they induce a metabolic transfer of energies. Following a biological model of digestion, they impel the pill to travel from glucose (the pill's existing state of potential) to hard candy (a glucose-sucrose blend) to pure sucrose. After passing through petroleum jelly, it moves on to the starches—tapioca—and then meringue. If they are able to make it reach the state of pound cake, a complex carbohydrate, with the penultimate addition of eggs, the bagpipe will play "Amazing Grace" and thereby communicate with God. Written by John Newton, an ex-libertine and ex-slave trader who became a minister in the Anglican church, "Amazing Grace" (ca. 1760–70) is one of America's most popular hymns. Its place in *OTTOshaft* as the musical embodiment of ultimate hubris evokes the myth of Marsyas (in a pre-*Drawing Restraint 7* moment), who elicited the wrath of Apollo by playing all too well upon the flute. But this transcendent state is never fully realized; the pound cake is split in two, ensuring that the organism will never find absolute equilibrium. The structure of the piece mirrors this fundamental rift. The two halves of the narrative, embodied by Otto and the Character of Positive Restraint, continually come together only to divide. The image itself is partitioned into three separate video channels: In *OTTOdrone* the metabolic choreography uncoils through the labyrinth of the garage. In *AUTOdrone* the Character of Positive Restraint is shown repeatedly filling his orifices with medical dilators and bagpipe drones, in a Houdini-esque attempt to try on or even become the musical instrument. And in *OTTOshaft* he scales various elevator shafts throughout the Documenta site, as if inside the chanter and drones of an enormous bagpipe.

In *OTTOshaft* the dialectical relationship between Otto and Houdini opens up or fans outward to include other cast members, who are not discrete beings but multiple incarnations of the states embodied by the leading characters. The opening episode of *OTTOdrone* is a training sequence. Al Davis, the notorious Machiavellian manager of the renegade Oakland Raiders, is drilling Otto on how to play the bagpipe, teaching him the notes to "Amazing Grace." Although seemingly separate individuals—for the prosthetically enhanced Al Davis figure truly resembles the real-life football magnate—Otto and his coach are manifestations of a single entity. Combined, they suggest the process of discipline applied to raw potential, or, in Lacanian terms, the integration of the Law of the Father.[33] But Al—"Just win, baby"—Davis is no benevolent father figure. He is the one who masterminds the theft

32. Barney has described the film as "a piece of biological horror that is essentially architectural." See James Lingwood, "Keeping Track of Matthew Barney," *TATE: The Art Magazine*, no. 6 (summer 1995), p. 52. Kubrick used tracking shots intensively in the hotel's interior to invoke this zone of evil formally. Richard T. Jameson has described his technique: "Those spaces draw Jack [Jack Nicholson's character in the film]. Kubrick sees to it that they draw us as well. It's not merely a matter of corridors obsessively tracked. Virtually every shot in the film (whether the setting be the Overlook or not) is built around a central hole, a vacancy, a tear in the membrane of reality: a door that would lead us down another hallway, a panel of bright color that somehow seems more permeable than the surrounding dark tones, an infinite white glow behind a central close-up face, a mirror, a TV screen . . . a photograph. From the moment we lose the consoling sense of focus and destination supplied by that island picturesquely centered in the lake, we are careening through space." See Jameson, "Stanley Kubrick: *The Shining*," *Film Comment* 16 (July–August 1980), p. 30.

33. The fact that Barney's mother plays Al Davis in *OTTOshaft* adds an interesting twist to any psychoanalytic reading of the piece.

of the hubris pill and forces its metabolic conversion, regardless of the consequences. The embodiment of hubris, he compels Otto to strive for the ultimate hypertrophic condition, a total mastery of the body that, in the end, can result in an implosion from within.[34] (The Teflon and stainless steel that gradually replaced the ligaments, cartilage, and joints in Otto's knees have migrated to become the primary materials for Barney's sculptures.)

Otto's character is further fractured or triangulated into a chorus of three bagpipers wearing the Black Watch tartan, uniform of the British monarchy's own military band.[35] Al Davis joins them in full Highlander regalia. The Character of Positive Restraint meets the challenge and dons a disguise, filtering it through the Feminine Jim Blind of *RADIAL DRILL* and *DELAY OF GAME*. Transforming himself into a bagpiper, he wears the Dress Stewart tartan, a red-and-white plaid that draws its color scheme from the *arisaid*, an ancient Scottish dress for women that was predominantly white.

The hubris pill, in its successive metabolic states, is passed back and forth between the two teams, Black Watch and Dress Stewart. At one point in the narrative, two kilts, each representing an opposing side, are sewn together with cord and petroleum jelly. Here the organism is attempting to remain undifferentiated, to maintain a state of equilibrium that in the end proves impossible. When Otto and the Character of Positive Restraint come together for their final battle, switching between the tartans and their customary dress—the double zeros for the former (in both home and away colors) and the body harness for the latter—it is clear that neither will overpower the other nor preserve the momentary harmony of their union. The joined kilts unravel.

ZONE OF TRANSITION

OTTOshaft is a gate to the *Cremaster* cycle. "It was a project," explains Barney, "that admitted to itself that it can never achieve equilibrium, but it continued to try by enacting these rehearsals where equilibrium was exhibited."[36] The *Cremaster* cycle would take this principle as a governing force, extending and amplifying it over five installments, each of which imagines the possibility of symmetry only to experience some form of failure. *OTTOshaft* marked the end of the *Otto* cycle and, with it, a strain of humid, testosterone-driven, locker-room iconography in Barney's work. But the underlying theme of a system in conflict with itself to remain undifferentiated, when all determining factors point toward differentiation, informs the *Cremaster* project as a whole. The original biological metaphors of ascension and descension inherited from the *Otto* works are played out in the cycle's first three installments (*Cremasters 4*, *1*, and *5*), but eventually give way to a more abstracted and perhaps more generous understanding of form and its internal development.

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34. For a perceptive and detailed analysis of *OTTOshaft* that speculates on the dangers of hubristic hypertrophy for the body, see the booklet by Sean Rainbird, *A Twentieth-Century Enigma: Matthew Barney's Ottoshaft, 1992* (London: Tate Foundation, 2001).

35. The first military companies formed in the Scottish Highlands in 1677 came to be known as the Black Watch because of their dark tartans. Their responsibilities initially required guarding against cattle thieves and blackmailers, but eventually they engaged in battle, in particular during the Jacobite uprisings of 1715 and 1745. Each company had its drums and bagpipes, which is how the instrument became associated with warfare. As Sir Walter Scott once proclaimed, "Twelve Highlanders and a bagpipe make a rebellion." Quoted in Francis Collinson, *The Bagpipe: The History of a Musical Instrument* (London and Boston: Routledge, 1975), p. 166.

36. Barney, lecture of February 12, 1998.

Barney first deployed some of the key structural strategies of the *Cremaster* cycle in *OTTOshaft*, formulating them in relationship to the increased complexity of the piece. Filmed in multiple locations with a larger cast than in previous projects, *OTTOshaft* also involved a more elaborate story line. This intensification of narrative prompted more intricate forms of character development, but not in the conventional sense. For Barney character is embodied as much by place, costume, and prop as by attitude or sensibility. A character may be a dandified satyr, an apprentice Mason, a Celtic island, a baroque opera house, or a chorus of sixty showgirls. As "vectors" or "compulsions"[37] his characters are born from psychological constructs; they are personifications of inner, largely unexplored topographies. In this way they are all facets of a single organism, iterations of one system seeking equilibrium. As the *Cremaster* cycle unfolded in form and content, a corpus of leading characters emerged, each one informing the evolution of the next: the Loughton Candidate of *Cremaster 4*; Goodyear of *Cremaster 1*; the Queen of Chain and her Diva, Giant, and Magician of *Cremaster 5*; Gary Gilmore of *Cremaster 2*; and the Entered Apprentice and Hiram Abiff of *Cremaster 3*. "A lot of the ideas for the characters," explains Barney,

> come during the making of the previous piece.... There is an aspect to a character that possibly wasn't articulated in the piece I was working on, and that aspect becomes articulated in the next piece. In that way there is a resistance to character development beyond a certain point, beyond a kind of threshold between a sculptural entity and something that might be an overdetermined element. In that way there is a lack of character development that interests me—the fact that they can quiver between something understood as a character with agency and something that operates more as a state of some sort, or a zone.[38]

In addition to his leading characters, Barney utilizes the dramatic device of the chorus as a connecting fiber in the increasingly layered *Cremaster* narratives. His interest in the choric tradition was first manifest in *OTTOshaft*, with the triplication of Otto into a regimental guard unit. As in Greek tragedy the Black Watch pipers function as a chorus, which comments on and assists with the primary dramatic action; here they participate in the theft of the hubris pill and rehearse "Amazing Grace" by becoming one with the bagpipe. Although choruses manifest differently in each *Cremaster* installment, they play a fundamental role in the cycle. Given Barney's tactical restraint in preventing his main characters from developing beyond a basic

37. Barney uses these terms to describe the characters of the *Cremaster* cycle in Romney, "Matthew Barney," p. 91.

38. Barney, quoted in Sans, "Matthew Barney: Modern Heroes," p. 30.

Concept drawing for *OTTOshaft*, 1992

communicative level,[39] the choruses are often the most accessible entities in the work, providing, in some cases, entertainment, comic relief, and pure visual pleasure. They vary in scale and format with the needs of each film. In *Cremaster 1* eight glacial air hostesses attend to their charge—Goodyear, a fully ascended creature inhabiting two blimps. In *Cremaster 2* the Mormon Tabernacle Choir bears witness to murder, sitting in judgment on a convicted killer. In *Cremaster 3* the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and the Masonic ritual-cum-competition staged in its rotunda provide a choric interlude that alludes to each of the *Cremaster* installments. The trio of fairies in *Cremaster 4* incarnates the three possible paths traveled in the narrative: ascension, descension, and the equivocation between. And the budding hermaphroditic water sprites in *Cremaster 5* assist the fully descended Giant in the process of differentiation.

The most fundamental character or element in each *Cremaster* film is the location in which the narrative takes place. Barney's geographic impulse was to some extent triggered by the impact of the elevator shafts and

39. In speaking of character development, Barney has said, "They're brought to the point where potentially they could be developed one step further and become actual characters, but there is a conscious effort to stop at the point, allow them to be states or fields that aren't really capable of that kind of agency." Quoted in Romney, "Matthew Barney," p. 91.

underground setting on the development of *OTTOshaft*. As a performance artist who has always engaged directly with his sites, Barney has been inclined to weave exhibition venues into the concept of his work. For instance, he very consciously incorporated "West" and "East" Coast sensibilities into the schemes of *[facility of INCLINE]* and *[facility of DECLINE]*, paired projects that originally took place in Los Angeles and New York. Their Feminine Jim Blind characters—the Hollywood starlet and the Manhattan sophisticate—were meant, like any good camouflage, to blend into their particular surroundings.

Location took on a catalyzing role in the *Cremaster* cycle. The entire narrative construct of each installment flowed directly out of its geographic and architectural setting. These spatial coordinates determined the degree of ascension or descension expressed, the identity of the characters, and the order of the cycle itself. They became the individual kernels that, one by one, generated the discrete but interrelated episodes of the *Cremaster* saga. In fact the five locations were the first elements of the project that Barney defined. As early as 1992 he had begun conceptualizing a multipart program through which to further explore the biological model of differentiation so integral to the *Otto* works. The bipolar structure of *OTTOshaft* invited further division into multiple scenarios, with the goal of creating a more complex organism; its eccentric narrative offered a glimpse into the yet untapped cinematic and sculptural fantasies that Barney would create during the ensuing ten years. In a collage drawing created at the time of *OTTOshaft*, Barney laid out a conceptual map of what the *Cremaster* cycle would eventually become. The drawing is a rendering of a bagpipe. The bag section, which is usually tartan, is formed out of photographs of two pipers, their faces masked with halved field emblems and their kilts sewn together—the dialectic of Otto and Houdini held in check by the tension of a single thread. Six bagpipe drones emanate outward from this dual form on which are indicated the elevator shafts in Kassel where Barney planned to stage the various components of *OTTOshaft*: the Neue Galerie (two passenger elevators), the Documenta Halle (one passenger elevator), the Fridericianum (one passenger elevator and one freight), the Tief Garage (one passenger elevator). In a separate but adjacent zone on the paper are written the names of five further locations: "Bronco Stadium; White Sands/Columbia Icefield; Chrysler Building; Ireland; Bath House/Istanbul."[40] Although some of these specified areas would change by the time their respective films were realized—the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah replaced White Sands; the Isle of Man supplanted Ireland; and the Turkish bath house is now in Budapest—this list of destinations provides a road map to the conceptual topography of the *Cremaster* cycle.

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40. To the side of this diagram is a small drawing of two hands pulling at a nub of skin or a bodily orifice with the number six below them. This indicates that the *Cremaster* cycle was originally to have six sections, the last being specifically biological in content. Conversation with the artist, July 18, 2001.

MYTHOLOGICAL DETOURS

> *The most awful, most secret forces . . . lie at the heart of all things . . . a presence, that was neither man nor beast, neither the living nor the dead, but all things mingled, the form of all things but devoid of all form.*
>
> —Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan*, 1894

Production photograph from *Drawing Restraint 7*, 1993

Before beginning the *Cremaster* project, Barney created another work that, like *OTTOshaft*, can be read retrospectively as a passage into the cycle. *Drawing Restraint 7*, a three-channel video excursion into the Arcadian world of Greek mythology, inaugurated an entirely new aesthetic vocabulary: the mountaineering *über*-hero look of the Character of Positive Restraint, and Otto's double zeros, gave way to a dreamscape of fantastical hybrid creatures, of dueling satyrs and a yet-to-be-gendered "kid" caught in a furious tailspin. The action is compressed into the gorgeous, Aegean-blue interior of a limousine, which is driving at night across and through the bridges and tunnels connecting Manhattan to the lands surrounding it: Queensborough, George Washington, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Midtown, and Holland. A porous, liminal space, the city-island of Manhattan appears as a fluid region between the terrestrial world and the domain of the gods. Here mutant beings test the limits of hubris. The younger satyr, played by Barney in full-body prosthetic makeup, is the chauffeur. His frantic attempts to catch his own tail—in an effort to close the circle of his being, to secure his predifferentiated condition—is what powers the car in its endless loops through the anatomy of New York. As a technological extension of the satyrs' will-to-power, the limousine is, in the Deleuzian sense, a "desiring machine"—an entity driven by and productive of desire.[41] The challenge for the two older satyrs—one of them being part ram, the other part goat—is to create form, to inscribe a mark in the condensation gathering on the car's moon roof. As they wrestle for access to this process, the goat-man forces the ram into submission, using his horns to trace a line in the mist. Muscles strain, fur flies, hoofs and horns lock, and a drawing is made. Having completed their goal, both satyrs have won *and* lost, for hubris inevitably exacts rebuke. In the end they align their Achilles tendons and flay one another, enacting Apollo's revenge on Marsyas for thinking he could approximate the gods.

As a form the satyr is an anomaly, a disruption in the cosmic order of things. Part man, part beast, this mongrel creature existed in ancient thought as a reminder of the chaos lurking beneath the facade of reality. Pan, the Greek god of fertility and carnal desire, was a satyr. An accomplice of Dionysus, he represented unbridled desire and orgiastic abandon. Barney

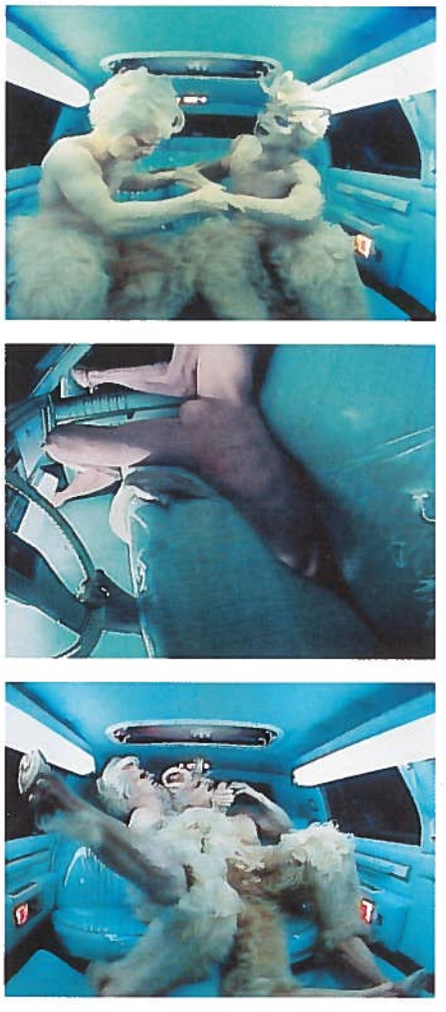
41. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari counter the Freudian and Marxist notion of desire as lack with a Nietzschean belief in desire as a limitless energy, writing that "the rule of continually producing production, of grafting producing onto the product, is characteristic of desiring machines or primary production: the production of production." See their treatise *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), p. 7.

has noted that he "was interested in the fact that 'Pan' is the root of 'panic' . . . because Pan leads you to Bacchus—he gives you the moment of unease before you let yourself go."[42] Etymologically, *pan* is the neuter form of the Greek *pas*, meaning "all" or "everything," and in this context it suggests a world where reality is molten, where the boundaries between things and beings evaporate and difference dissolves. Pan is a god of regression, leading the way back to an entirely undifferentiated realm: the time before time, the space before space. This primordial moment antecedes any origin myth; it exists outside of language. Pre-Genesis (and pregenital), it lacks all definition or structure.

The biblical account of creation is premised wholly on the principles of division, differentiation, and categorization: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. . . . And God said, Let there be light: and there was light . . . and God divided the light from the darkness . . . and God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters."[43] This motif of partition extends to all living things, with strict prohibitions against the intermingling or hybridization of seed, fruit, animal, or human.[44] To contest the laws of differentiation is thus to challenge the very word of God. To produce new forms that do not adhere to the divine code of bipolar segregation—strange amalgams, forbidden mixtures, unearthly fusions—is to usurp and distort the role of the Creator. This is the uncontainable will of the demiurge in action. It is revealing here that "hybrid" stems from the Greek *hubris*, which connotes an irreparable violence, a tearing asunder of all that is stable, known, or predictable.[45] As a symptom of hubris, hybridization can undo (or remake) the world.

Playing the role of artist-cum-demiurge, Barney grafted the quintessential myth of hubris onto the biological model of pregenital undifferentiation to render *Drawing Restraint 7*. The resulting artwork—visually lush, and mesmerizing in its otherworldliness—anticipates the fantastical cosmology of the *Cremaster* cycle, in which the laws of difference have been entirely rewritten. In Barney's epic project, terms like "human," "architecture," "landscape," "vehicle," and "animal" designate not separate entities but zones of interpenetration. Taxonomic classifications premised on hierarchy and quantifiable variation yield to the anarchy of hybridization. Characters transmogrify into multiple versions of themselves, cars perform ritual sacrifice, islands have digestive tracts, buildings have diaphragms, bees pollinate people, and playing fields have reproductive systems.

Barney's metamorphic vocabulary—in which intangible ideas acquire palpable form, and the distinction between mind and matter disintegrates—invokes the defining characteristics of literary fantasy. Governed by the



Video stills from *Drawing Restraint 7*, 1993

42. Barney, quoted in Goodeve, "Travels in Hypertrophia," p. 69.

43. Genesis 1:1–6. This idea and much of the following discussion are indebted to the work of the French psychoanalyst and theorist Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, whose book *Creativity and Perversion* (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1984) was an important early source for Barney.

44. Chasseguet-Smirgel quotes from Genesis 1:11–12 to make this point: "And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit *after his kind*, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed *after his kind*, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, *after his kind*"; italics mine. *Creativity and Perversion*, pp. 8–9. Chasseguet-Smirgel historically contextualizes the trope of division and its manifestation in Jewish dietary laws, incest taboos, compulsory heterosexuality, etc., as rooted in the struggle of ancient Judaic monotheism (and its patriarchal constructs) against the paganism surrounding it (pp. 6–7).

45. See ibid., p. 9, and Wakefield, *PACE CAR for the HUBRIS PILL*, p. 16. "Hybrid" comes from the Latin *hybrida*, a piglet resulting from the union of a wild boar and a tame sow. *Hybrida* comes from the Greek *hubris* (or *hybris*), meaning wanton violation or violence, excessive pride. See http://www.geocities.com/etymonline/h2etym.htm.

oxymoron, a figure of speech that "holds together contradictions and sustains them in an impossible unity, without progression toward synthesis," the fantastic imagines a new kind of reality.[46] Antirational rather than irrational, the fantastic embraces antinomism and hovers in a realm between the real and the surreal. According to the Structuralist Tzvetan Todorov, within the genre of the fantastic it is not plausible to attribute phantasmic occurrences definitively to rational causes. If so, the genre would be that of the *uncanny*, in which the inexplicable, no matter how horrifying, can be explicated by previous (repressed) events, which adhere to laws of the natural world. On the other hand, it is also impossible in the fantastic to explain the extraordinary by means of magical intervention, as can be done in fairy tales; supernatural causes belong to the genre of the *marvelous*. The fantastic, then, lies between the uncanny and the marvelous, between a past steeped in reality and a future of infinite possibility.[47]

In the realm of the fantastic, the borders we perceive between the organic and the inorganic become irrelevant. The body and its psyche are left susceptible to transformative experience, including the protraction or contraction of time, the distortion of space, and the fusion of subject and object. Such phenomena are common to the realms of madness, dreams, and drug-induced states of dementia. They are also synonymous with the way infants perceive reality until they are able to differentiate themselves from their surroundings. In this way the fantastic corresponds to the first stage in Freud's model of ego development: the primary, narcissistic, autoerotic moment when the infant feels at one with the world.[48] From here, according to Freud, the child will progress from this anal-sadistic stage of self-love to an identification with external objects and then to full genital maturity and (sexual) desire for the other. This psychosexual evolution requires recognition of and respect for difference: between the generations, the sexes, and specific forms of pleasure (i.e., genital versus oral or anal). Yet there remains a fundamental compulsion or instinct to return to the initial, utopian phase, and Freud identifies this instinct as the most extreme form of the pleasure principle: a longing for undifferentiation, a return to point zero.[49] This regressive drive is the foundation for perversion, in which the most sacrosanct partitions—parent/child, male/female, self/world—are utterly eroded.[50] It results in the creation of an anal-sadistic universe, a Sadean realm in which the paternal law is violated on every possible level. In the words of psychoanalyst Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, it becomes "the universe of *sacrilege*":

> All that is taboo, forbidden or sacred is devoured by the digestive tract, an enormous grinding machine disintegrating the molecules of the mass thus obtained in order to reduce it to

46. Jackson, *Fantasy*, p. 21.

47. Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975).

48. Jackson makes this point in *Fantasy*, pp. 72–73: "The fantastic can be seen as corresponding to the first stage in Freud's evolutionary model, that stage of a magical and animistic thought mode when primitive man and the young child have no sense of difference between self and other, subject and object worlds. Fantasy, with its tendency to dissolve structures, moves towards an ideal of *undifferentiation*, and this is one of its defining characteristics. It refuses difference, distinction, homogeneity, reduction, discrete forms."

49. See ibid., p. 73.

50. See Chasseguet-Smirgel, *Creativity and Perversion*, pp. 2–3.

> excrement. The erotogenic zones and different parts of the body become interchangeable and are metamorphosed by a kind of diabolical surgery. . . . I think this recurring theme of the changing of forms—of man's ability not to annihilate things but to dissolve and metamorphose them after breaking down the molecules—means that all things revert to chaos, the original chaos that may be identified with excrement.[51]

The perverse imagination—well rehearsed in Barney's early work, with its specific references to anal sadism, digestion, regression, and morphosis—is what dreams the *Cremaster* cycle. No longer a subject, as it was in the *Otto* cycle, the creative potential of perversion pervades the very genetic code of the *Cremaster* project; it is the conceptual goo—like Barney's signature petroleum jelly—that links each installment, the substance that binds together the drawings, films, photographs, sculptures, and books. On another level the psychoanalytic model of perversion provides Barney with yet another vehicle through which to contemplate the conflicts inherent to the process of differentiation and the utopian promises of its reversal. In the *Cremaster* cycle he amalgamates the psychoanalytic with the biological and the mythological to create a polysemic thematic structure. Like the three running legs of the Manx triskelion—the emblem for *Cremaster 4*—these tropes power the cycle's narrative drive, giving Barney a range of interrelated metaphors with which to shape his sculptural project.

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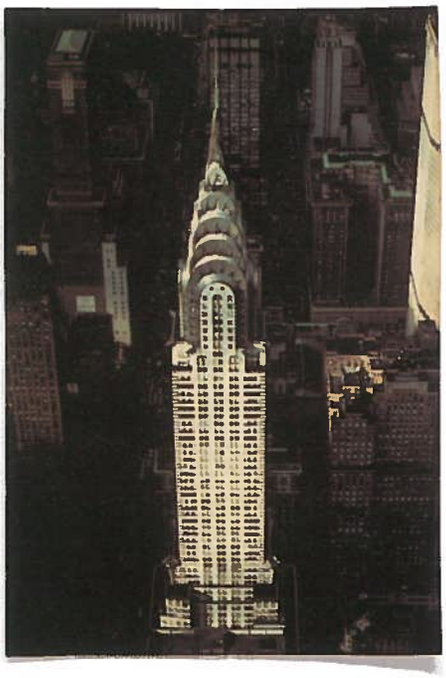
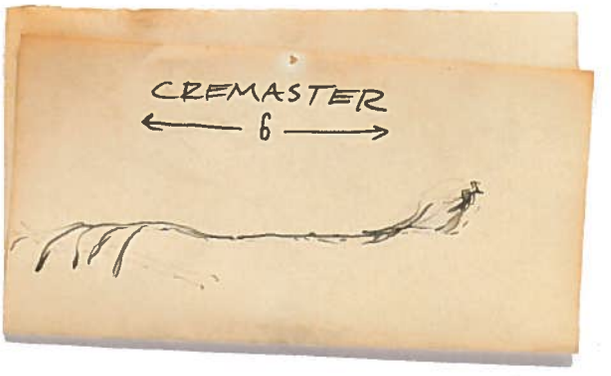
51. Ibid., p. 4.

Artist's conceptual mapping of the *CREMASTER* cycle, showing locations, ca. 1994



Artist's conceptual mapping of the *CREMASTER* cycle, showing locations, ca. 1994


CREMASTER
6

PART II | Cycle

OF GEOGRAPHY AND GENEALOGY

The *Cremaster* cycle follows an eastward trajectory, beginning in the American Northwest and ending in Eastern Europe. The first film, *Cremaster 1*, takes place in Boise, Idaho, in the blue-Astroturfed Bronco Stadium of Boise State University. *Cremaster 2* moves back and forth between the Columbia Icefield in Canada and the Bonneville Salt Flats in northern Utah, which form part of the Mormon basin. These two sites connect the longitudinal sweep of the Rocky Mountains, which, as part of the Continental Divide, splits westward-flowing from eastward-flowing waters.[52] New York's classic Art Deco Chrysler Building, designed by William Van Alen and completed in 1930, is the setting for *Cremaster 3*. The film also includes detours to the city's Guggenheim Museum, to the harness track in Saratoga Springs, to Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland, and to Fingal's Cave, on Staffa, an island in the Scottish Hebrides. The Isle of Man—set in the Irish Sea, and host to the annual TT (Tourist Trophy) motorcycle race—is the location for *Cremaster 4*. And *Cremaster 5*, the final link in the filmic chain, features Budapest's neo-Renaissance Hungarian State Opera House, Gellért Baths, and Lánchíd Bridge.

Preselected for their symbolic valences, these diverse locations form their own constellation, the outline of which metaphorically traces the cyclical path taken by an organism in conflict with itself. Collectively they demarcate a distinct landscape, a unique intercontinental geographic swath that is imbued with narrative. The confluence of place and story in the *Cremaster* cycle reinforces the sculptural dimensionality of the films while literally grounding their metaphoric content in the empirical world. Barney started the project with this map, knowing only the particular sites and the degrees of "ascension" or "descension" they would individually express. It wasn't until he began each chapter that its plot emerged, in response to the history and distinctive traits of each location as well as to the degree of character articulation achieved in the film preceding it.[53]

Taking the cremaster muscle as its conceptual departure point, the project circulates around anatomical allusions to the height of the gonads during the embryonic process of sexual differentiation: *Cremaster 1* represents the most "ascended" state, *Cremaster 5* the most "descended." But as the cycle evolved over the course of a decade, this biological model became less prominent; other paradigms, such as biography, history, and codes of behavior, came to the fore as vessels for Barney's narrative constructs. For this reason, while the *Cremaster* cycle should certainly be viewed in its specified numerical sequence, it should also be experienced in the order it was made (*4, 1, 5, 2, 3*), for this will reveal the development of Barney's relationship to the material and of his thinking process. As a topographical map, a diagrammatic proposal,

52. Saul B. Cohen, *The Columbia Gazetteer of the World* (New York: Columbia University, 1998), p. 718. Considered the "backbone" of North America, the Continental or "Great" Divide runs along the crest of the Rocky Mountains from Northern Alaska to New Mexico.

53. "It's like a game of add-on," Barney has explained. "The pieces have become more about storytelling: 'character zones' are created for a given project, and as they reach their limit of development (or lack of it), the remaining, unarticulated aspects of that zone become the outline for the next set of characters." Quoted in Goodeve, "Travels in Hypertrophia," p. 69.

CREMASTER 1: The Goodyear Waltz, 1995 (detail)

the *Cremaster* cycle has no definitive beginning or end, no indisputable point of departure. It functions as a loop, particularly in the chronology it subtly reveals.

The *Cremaster* cycle has an autobiographical dimension, which is quietly present throughout its chapters. Muted details of Barney's own life may be detected in his selection of locations for the project, which, when read together, suggest a personal genealogy. Boise is the town in which he grew up. Back then he must have been drawn to the 30,000-seat Bronco Stadium at Boise State University, since he was a serious athlete who played on his high school football team. For Barney, too, the Rocky Mountains represented a geographical partition, dividing his childhood home from New York City, where his mother relocated once his parents separated. After graduating from Yale University, in New Haven, Barney moved to New York, where he lives today.

CREMASTER 1: Red Lounge Manual, 1995

These biographical facts correspond to the first three *Cremaster* installments, with their locations in the American West and in New York. In *Cremasters 4* and *5* the chronology circles back on itself to a time before birth: the Isle of Man, situated in the Irish Sea midway between England, Ireland, and Scotland, suggests the artist's own Celtic ancestry (as also, for that matter, do the allusions to the Irish labor unions of 1930s New York in *Cremaster 3*). And Budapest, in turn, is the birthplace of Harry Houdini, né Ehrich Weiss, who is in many ways Barney's alter ego, as manifest in the *Otto* cycle's Character of Positive Restraint. This chronological two-step—a movement forward only to go back (and vice versa)—is given dramatic form in *Cremaster 2*, which makes its narrative vehicle the life of Gary Gilmore, the convicted killer immortalized in Norman Mailer's book *The Executioner's Song* (1979). Said to have been a grandson of Houdini, Gilmore was executed by firing squad in 1977 for murdering two men. Barney's version of the story begins with Gilmore's conception, enacted as a séance officiated over by Baby Fay La Foe, his paternal grandmother and an amateur spiritualist who supposedly seduced the magician.[54] The narrative proceeds with one of Gilmore's crimes and with his execution, then arcs backward through crystalline layers of glacial ice to reveal the liaison between Houdini and Baby Fay at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, where Houdini performed one of his famous "metamorphosis" performances. Staged by Barney in the ice of the Canadian Rockies, this encounter takes on the magnitude of predestination, setting in motion the factors that will determine Gilmore's destructive actions.[55] It also reinforces the paternal dynamic explored in the film,

54. Every year on October 31, the anniversary of Houdini's death, fans perform séances in an effort to contact his spirit.

55. The World's Columbian Exposition actually took place in Chicago, where a nineteen-year-old Ehrich Weiss performed as Harry Houdini as part of a magic act called "The Brothers Houdini." Making a play on words, Barney transposes this world's fair onto the Columbia Icefield.

which is embodied by the playing of Houdini by Mailer, who, as the author of *The Executioner's Song*, had brought Gilmore to life, so to speak.

The chronology of the *Cremaster* cycle follows a similarly looping trajectory, moving forward in increments only to sweep backward to form a much larger circle in time. The locations of the Isle of Man and Budapest suggest generative forces: places, eras, and individuals that resonate forward, impacting on Barney's consciousness and on his development as an artist. Their position in the order of the cycle also suggests a deliberate temporal confusion and a disregard for generational differences that is a hallmark of the perverse imagination. In a text remarkably relevant to the *Cremaster* cycle, Irving Buchen writes that in perverse literature there is a "curious and disarming fusion of the old and the new, the pagan and the sophisticated. It appears to be moving in two directions simultaneously. . . . Its paradoxical chronology of progressive regression grants it a circular shape in which ends are buried in origins as the child once again becomes the father of the man."[56]

EMBRYONIC TIME

While the *Cremaster* cycle expands outward in time from the period of an individual life to the passage of centuries, it also describes what is by comparison almost a nanomoment: the first six weeks of an embryo's development. During this fleeting interlude, the just-formed fetus is pure potential. Neither male nor female, it hovers in a realm of gender indeterminacy. Free from defining pronouns and anatomical indicators, the fetus, for one brief instant, occupies a space of possibility. It lingers before the moment of difference, the "either-or" that shapes all future thought and action. The *Cremaster* cycle imagines the prospect of suspending this phase indefinitely, resisting the inexorable impetus toward division. Its five installments ponder this internal struggle against definition, while tracing the passage from full ascension to complete descension.

CREMASTER 1

Cremaster 1, a candy-coated musical revue shot in Barney's hometown, envisions the state of total ascension. It is, therefore, the most undifferentiated of the installments, though the sensibility of the piece is decidedly feminine. Perhaps this is because the developing embryo is always by default female. Every human has at least one X chromosome; it takes the addition of the sex-determining Y chromosome, and the hormones this chromosome triggers, to shift the organism toward some variation of maleness. *Cremaster 1* envisages this zone of willful ambiguity on the expansive blue playing field of Boise's Bronco Stadium at night.

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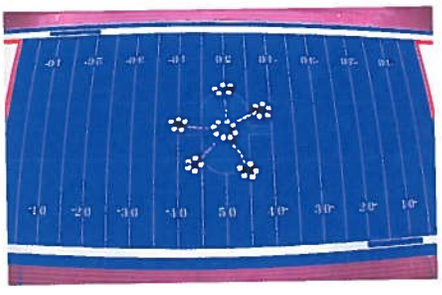
56. Irving Buchen, ed., *The Perverse Imagination: Sexuality and Literary Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), p. 29.



Video still from *CREMASTER 1*, 1995

Two Goodyear Blimps—"aerial ambassadors"[57] and corporate icons for the world-famous rubber and tire company—float above the stadium, like the airships that often record and transmit live sporting events. The interior of each blimp is outfitted in futuristic retro chic: shades of the mod-yet-minimalist space station of Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) merge with the streamlined ocean-liner sensibility of Warren McArthur. Four air hostesses, uniformed in trimly fitted 1930s suits (designed by Isaac Mizrahi), silently tend to each blimp. The only sound is the soft yet persistent ambient music, which suggests the hum of the engines. In the middle of each cabin sits a white-clothed table, its top decorated with an abstract Art Deco centerpiece sculpted from petroleum jelly and surrounded by clusters of grapes. In one blimp the grapes are green, in the other they are purple. Under both of these otherwise identical tables resides Goodyear, a platinum-blonde Hollywood starlet wearing a white satin teddy, gartered stockings, and clear-plastic high-heeled shoes, complete with ankle straps and a bell-like funnel attached to one sole. Miraculously inhabiting both blimps simultaneously, this doubled creature sets the narrative in motion. After prying an opening in the tablecloth(s) above her head, she plucks grapes from their stems and pulls them down into her insulated white cell. With these grapes—which get mysteriously ingested and expelled through the silver funnel on her shoe—Goodyear produces diagrams that direct the choreographic patterns created by a troupe of dancing girls on the field below. The camera switches back and forth between Goodyear's drawings and aerial views of the chorines moving into formation: their designs shift from parallel lines to the figure of a barbell, from a large circle to an outline of splitting and multiplying cells, and from a horizontally divided field emblem to a rendering of an undifferentiated reproductive system. Gliding in time to the effervescent musical score, the smiling chorus girls delineate the contours of a still-androgynous gonadal structure, which echoes the shapes of the two blimps overhead.

Cremaster 1 is pure utopia, a narcissistic paradise of total undifferentiation. This is the pleasure principle incarnate. The organism depicted—a compilation of Goodyear, her blimps, her attendants, and her chorus—is suspended in a tautological state of self-identification. Its only referent is itself. And since there is no sense of contradiction or conflict, the organism feels at one with the world. Its only challenge is to try to sustain this ephemeral sense of equilibrium. But Barney adds a subtle reminder of the dangers inherent in the hubris of absolute self-enclosure: the bunches of grapes on each table are the attributes of Bacchus, Greek god of wine, and a symbol of orgiastic abandonment. Such coded references to Dionysian excess in this tightly choreographed musical number of a film hint at the very fine line between self-love and loss of self.

57. Quoted from the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company's Web site: http://www.goodyearblimp.com.

CREMASTER 2: Genealogy, 1999

CREMASTER 2

Cremaster 2, based loosely on the life of Gary Gilmore, introduces conflict into the system. On the biological level it corresponds to the next phase of fetal development: the initial stirrings of the drive toward sexual division from an originary state of innate bisexuality. This represents a movement toward the internal reorganization of the still-neutral gonadal structures: "One set eventually regresses and atrophies while the other proliferates and differentiates."[58] In Barney's reinterpretation and abstraction of the process, the organism fights against this progressive division, trying to remain in the state of equilibrium imagined in *Cremaster 1*. *Cremaster 2* embodies this regressive impulse through its looping, two-step narrative and genealogical structure, moving from 1977, the year of Gilmore's execution, to 1893, when Houdini, who may have been Gilmore's grandfather, performed one of his great escapes at the World's Columbian Exposition. The idea of looking forward and backward simultaneously, in a kind of chronological double vision, is manifest in images of landscapes doubled by reflection, a leitmotif of the film. The opening sequence shows the vast horizon line of the Bonneville Salt Flats bisecting a mountain range, which is reflected in the transient lake that seasonally floods the ground. In the Columbia Icefield the camera zooms into crystal-blue glacial crevices, the sides of which appear as mirror images of themselves, as if seen in a kaleidoscope. Rotating these views ninety degrees to create abstract vertical images that recall Rorschach shapes, Barney alludes by mere form to the psychological dimensions explored in the narrative.

58. John Money, "Psychosexual Differentiation," in Money, ed., *Sex Research: New Developments* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965), p. 4.

CREMASTER 2: The Man in Black, 1999

Cremaster 2 is structured around three primary interrelated themes—the landscape as witness, the story of Gilmore, and the life of bees—that metaphorically describe the emancipatory potential of moving backward in order to escape one's destiny. The narrative begins and ends in glacial chasms, a device that metonymically suggests the migration of a glacier from northern Utah to southern Canada, its retreat forging the desert-like salt flats, the Great Salt Lake, and the dramatic gorges of the Rocky Mountains, which all play roles in the film. The environment depicted is the barren frontier of the early Mormon settlers, religious separatists carving out their own Zion on American soil, where the ten lost tribes of Israel were one day to reunite. An avenging people with occultist tendencies, the original Mormons taught that redemption could only be obtained through "blood atonement," the actual spilling of a sinner's blood on the earth. Such was the legacy that Gilmore, himself a Mormon, inherited.

Having established the western landscape as a character, Barney proceeds by weaving together Gilmore's biography and the behavior of the bee colony, symbol of Utah and of Mormonism. Both Gilmore's kinship to Houdini and his correlation with the male bee or drone is established in the séance/conception scene in the beginning of the film. All the participants—Fay; her son, Frank; and Frank's wife, Bessie—wear corsets under their turn-of-the-century garb, and they sit in stylized chairs that reiterate the constriction of their wasp waists. Less a fashion than a fetishistic process promising pleasure through the endurance of pain, corseting is a verb.[59] In Barney's depiction of the Gilmore family, it represents an act of extreme control, and alludes to the questions that Gary's execution will raise about the efficacy of volition in the face of destiny. Summoning forth Houdini's spirit, Fay's psychic intervention—complete with ectoplasm and pollen—induces a meditative sex act between Frank and Bessie, which is intercut with scenes of the magician's metamorphosis. At the moment of climax, Frank's torso begins to putrefy, and a bee flies from the hive at the head of his penis. Destroyed during the act of fertilization, as a drone bee is doomed to death after mating with the queen, Frank creates another drone: his son Gary. From the moment of his inception, then, Gary's destiny is sealed.

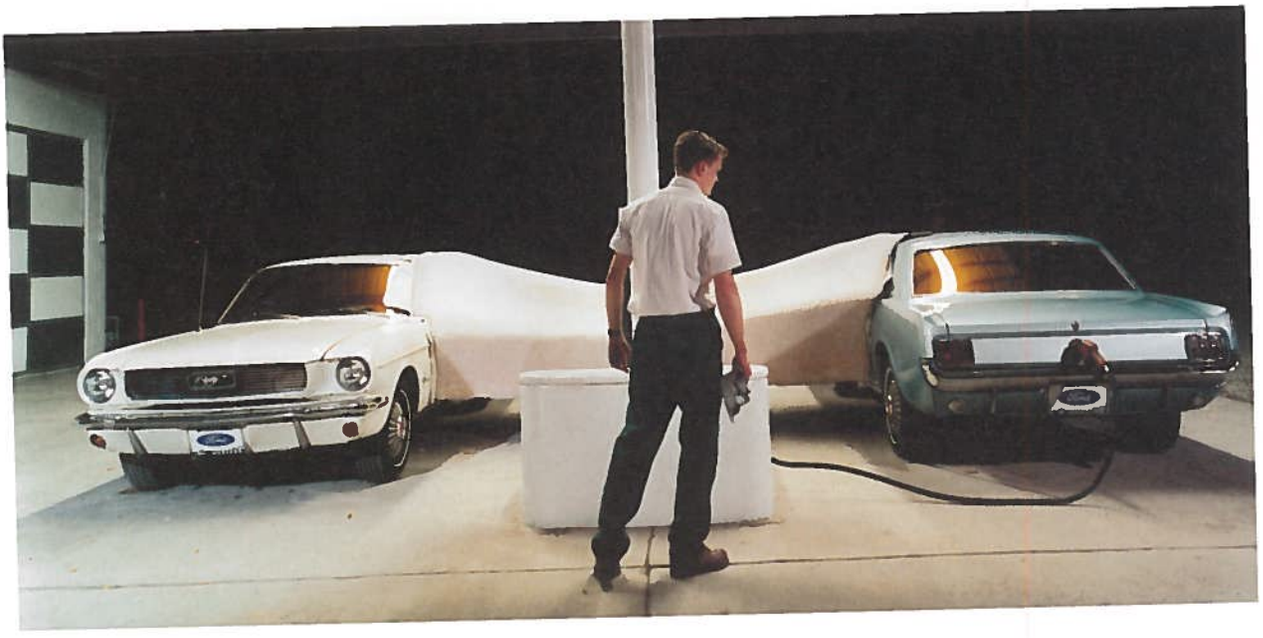
Gilmore's profound awareness of his own condemnation, of his irreversible role as drone, is expressed in the ensuing scene through a chain of metonymic signifiers that could only come together within the poetic space of the *Cremaster* cycle. The setting is a recording studio where Dave Lombardo, a former member of the thrash speed-metal band Slayer, is pounding out a drum solo to the buzzing sound of thousands of swarming bees. (The score was written by Barney collaborator Jonathan Bepler.) A man in black leather, with the voice of Steve Tucker, lead vocalist of the death metal

59. "Endurance is precisely the quality required for body-sculpture, because the tight-lacer's ultimate objective is to extend the erotic experience in time. Unlike 'pure' sadomasochists, sculptural fetishists aim less for the momentary violent ecstasy than to prolong a state of just-bearable tension." David Kunzle, *Fashion and Fetishism: A Social History of the Corset, Tight-Lacing and Other Forms of Body-Sculpture in the West* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1982), p. 37.

The Cabinet of the Man in Black, 1999, with detail (below)

band Morbid Angel, growls into a telephone. He is shrouded by bees. Collectively these figures allude to the country star Johnny Cash, who is said to have called Gilmore on the night of his execution in response to the convict's dying wish. The lyrics are Gilmore's own, excerpted from letters published in *The Executioner's Song*:

> The ghosts have descended and set upon me with a force
> I smack 'em down but they sneak back and climb in
> Demons that they are tell me foul jokes
> They want to sap my will, drink my strength, drain my hope
> Lost empty foul dream motherfuckers. . . .
>
> Weave a web of oldness
> Oldness pull in harness
> Like oxen a wood creaking
> Tumbrel a gray wood
> Tumbrel through the cobbled streets
> Of my ancient mind



Video still from *CREMASTER 2*, 1999

The transmutation of Cash into the Lombardo/Tucker/death-metal matrix connects Gilmore's lamentations about being haunted by "oldness" to the dark undertow of heavy metal music's flirtation with satanic lore. It suggests that Gilmore's destiny of being annihilated like a drone had its roots in previous lifetimes, in an ancient curse passed through his paternal lineage.[60]

Barney imagines the act that sealed Gilmore's fate—the cold-blooded murder of a young Mormon gas station attendant in Orem, Utah—in both sculptural and dramatic forms. Following Mailer's inferences that Gilmore killed out of a kind of perverse longing for union with his girlfriend, Nicole Baker, Barney represents their relationship through two conjoined cars: the blue and the white 1966 Mustangs that they coincidentally both owned. He connects these vehicles via a honeycomb tunnel, which joins the front seats into one long upholstered channel and traverses the pump island of the filling station where they are parked. Trapped inside this eroticized automotive zone, Gilmore (played by a prosthetically altered Barney) wrestles with his desires, his will, and his destiny. His struggle is conveyed by his frustrated attempts to build an abstracted mountain range—the glacier-hewn Rocky Mountains—out of Vaseline, in an allusion to the trajectory of his own life, moving forward to his execution and backward toward the time of Houdini. Thoughts of Nicole materialize in the plaintive voice of folksinger Patty Griffin, who is shown for a moment, upside down and against a black backdrop, so that her face and hair form the outline of a skull. Gilmore changes

60. Mikal Gilmore, younger brother of Gary Gilmore, suggests this notion of a family curse in his memoir *Shot in the Heart* (New York: Doubleday, 1994). The reference to heavy metal music also functions similarly to Barney's use of the Oakland Raiders as a symbol in his work: the Raiders—whose banner "Commitment to Excellence" appears in the back of the recording studio—are a favorite team of Barney's, just as Slayer is one of his favorite bands.

Production photograph from *CREMASTER 2*, 1999

out of prison uniform[61] into jeans and a T-shirt, revealing a tiny bud of a penis and no scrotum to speak of—a condition alluding to Mailer's hypothesis that Gilmore was sexually incompetent and had pederastic tendencies. It is also an anatomical disorder—known as "partial-androgen-insensitivity"—that functions here as a reminder (not without humor) of the undescended testicles in the early stages of embryonic development that are *Cremaster 2*'s thematic paradigm.[62]

In the murder sequence that follows, Gilmore shoots the gas station attendant, Max Jensen, twice in the back of the head on the tiled floor of the station bathroom. He commits his crime seeking some form of consummation or release, approaching this catastrophic act as if, in J. G. Ballard's words, it will be "a fertilizing rather than destructive event."[63] Indeed, it sets in motion the trial and verdict that will condemn him to death, a sentence he embraces despite all efforts to overturn it. (Gilmore's highly controversial execution was the first act of capital punishment performed in the United States in a decade.) Barney stages the judgment of Gilmore in the Mormon Tabernacle Choir's elaborate, pipe-organ-studded hall. Replicated in 1:8 scale and digitally animated, the Choir itself echoes the beehive—industrious, ordered, guarded, defensive. An emblem of the self-contained Mormon community, the Tabernacle/beehive bears witness to the murder of one of its own and seeks vengeance through the doctrine of blood atonement, otherwise known, in contemporary parlance, as state-sanctioned execution. Gilmore welcomes

61. At the time of his murders of Max Jensen and Ben Bushnell, Gary Gilmore was on parole from a twelve-year sentence for armed robbery. This was only one in a string of incarcerations, a fact that interested Barney, for it made his subject more of a blank slate on which to draw character. "Gilmore spent his entire life in prison so he doesn't have a developed life in the world. Conceptually he's more of a vessel than would be somebody who lives in the world." Barney, in an interview with Jonathan Jones, "Lonesome Cowboys: Matthew Barney," *Untitled*, no. 21 (spring 2000), p. 6, reprinted at http://www.postmedia.net (2001).

62. In cases of borderline androgen insensitivity, when "body cells . . . can make only partial use of androgen, . . . the child is born with a clitorine penis lacking a urinary tube and only slightly larger than an ordinary clitoris. The testicles can be felt as lumps in the groin. The scrotum is partially unfused." Money and Tucker, *Sexual Signatures*, p. 55. Money and Tucker recommend that infants born with this hormonal disorder be surgically transformed into girls, even though they have XY chromosomes.

63. Seeing a potential for transcendence in catastrophe or bodily mutilation, Ballard repeatedly emphasizes technologically induced death. In *The Atrocity Exhibition*, p. 23, he writes, "Apart from its ontological function, redefining the elements of space and time in terms of our most potent consumer durable, the car crash may be perceived unconsciously as a fertilizing rather than destructive event—a liberation of sexual energy." This sensibility is also applicable to the motorcycle crash of *Cremaster 4* and the demolition derby of *Cremaster 3*.

Video stills from *CREMASTER 2*, 1999

death, refusing to appeal his sentence and opting for execution by firing squad, in a literal interpretation of the Mormon belief that blood must be shed in order for a sinner to obtain salvation.[64]

Cremaster 2 stages Gilmore's execution as a prison rodeo in an arena cast entirely from salt in the middle of the flooded Bonneville Salt Flats. In itself a sculpted earthwork, this gleaming white stadium appears in the waters like a mirage, an ethereal receptacle for the ritualistic dream-sequence that ends Gilmore's life. A posse of mounted state troopers begins the proceedings by parading through the arena, making drawings in space like the precision dancers in *Cremaster 1*. Aerial shots capture their formations while revealing the immense, almost otherworldly scale of the Utah landscape surrounding them. Gilmore is lowered onto a Brahman bull; the gates are opened, and he rides to his death. Two mounted sheriffs use a silver rod to measure the distance between the dying bull's head and the ground onto which it slowly falls. Recalling the coroners who attended Gilmore's execution—as witnesses to the four shots to the heart—these men record the absolute moment of death, making certain their prisoner is categorically deceased. In the blinding white light of the salt flats, both man and beast expire. The ring of ten bison that forms around Gilmore's fallen body symbolizes his salvation within the Church of Latter-Day Saints. Barney translated this ceremonial circle from a baptismal font in the Mormon Temple in Salt Lake City; sculpted into the font are bison representing the lost tribes of Israel (Asher, Dan, Ephraim, Gad, Issachar, Manasseh, Naphtali, Reuben, Simeon, and Zebulun), which, according to Mormon belief, were to reunite on American soil and create paradise on Earth.[65]

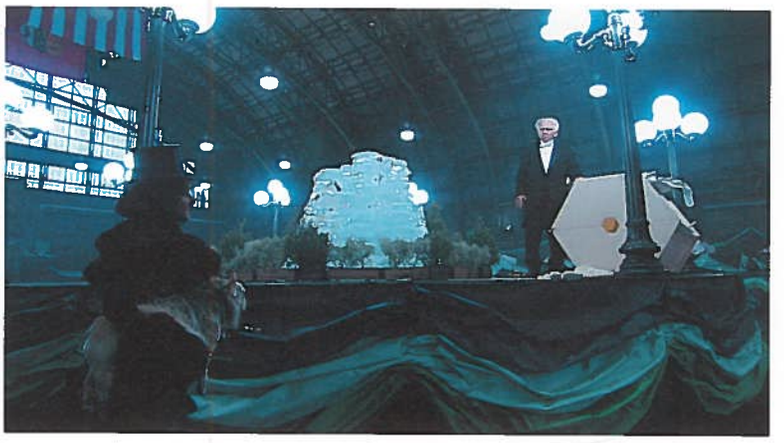
In Barney's interpretation of the execution, Gilmore was less interested in attaining Mormon redemption than in performing a chronological two-step that would return him to the space of his grandfather Houdini, with whom he identified the notion of absolute freedom through self-transformation. Seeking escape from the bonds of his fate, he chose death in an act of ultimate self-will. "In about 30 hrs. I will be dead," he wrote to Nicole. "That's what they call it—death. Its just a release—a change of form."[66] Gilmore's metaphoric transportation back to the turn of the century is rendered in a dance sequence featuring the Texas two-step accompanied by Nicole Baker's lamentation:

> For lost is my mind
> Silent by dawn
> Loves away stolen
> And hurting is long

64. Richard Flood points out that Gary Gilmore became a "public relations nightmare" for the Mormons because, as a Mormon, he "lost none of his Church's baptismal privileges, including the guarantee of immortality. Through his self-willed Blood Atonement, Gilmore doubly insured that he achieved the eternal glory that was his Mormon birthright; it was the ultimate great escape." Flood, "The Land of the Everlasting Hills," in Matthew Barney, *Cremaster 2*, exh. cat. and artist's book (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1999), n.p.

65. According to Mormon doctrine, two of the twelve tribes were never lost: the tribe of Judah became the Jewish nation and that of Joseph became the Mormons. A photograph of the sculpted baptismal font is included in the original storyboard for *Cremaster 2* and is reproduced on p. 230 in this volume. Barney created banners bearing the insignia of the ten lost tribes, which the mounted police carry into the stadium. He used these banners to divide his artist's book on *Cremaster 2* into sections or sequences.

66. Gary Gilmore, quoted in Norman Mailer, *The Executioner's Song* (New York: Warner Books, 1979), p. 857.



Video still from *CREMASTER 2*, 1999

So ask me no questions
Sing me no songs
Follow me nowhere
I'm already gone

Gilmore leaps into the void in a vain attempt to transcend his position as drone, thinking that Houdini, with his gift for metamorphosis, will hold the key to this esoteric process. In order for Gilmore or Houdini to overcome their rank, they must transform themselves into females: the worker bee or the queen herself.[67] In his metamorphosis performances Houdini would mysteriously switch places with his wife, Bess, from inside a padlocked trunk. Bound, shackled, and even enveloped in a bag, he would escape his constraints time and again to replace Bess on the stage. In the last scene of *Cremaster 2*—staged in the cold, foggy environs of the Columbian Exposition hall—Houdini has just completed his magic act. Ice sculptures of beehives melt around him and his trick cabinet. His accomplices, two uniformed Canadian Mounties, have already left the podium. The queen bee, Baby Fay La Foe (Gilmore), descends upon him, suspecting his plans for transgender transformation and sensing the emergence of a potential opponent for her throne. Her goal is to seduce and vanquish him. Houdini enters into this alliance willingly, certain he will withstand her destructive forces. The result, other than the life of Gary Gilmore, remains unknown.

CREMASTER 3

Cremaster 3, the last film of the cycle to be completed, forms the spine of the entire opus. As the central chapter of the five installments, it functions like a double mirror, reflecting those before and anticipating those to follow. In the

67. This section is paraphrased from the artist's unpublished notes on *Cremaster 2*.

CREMASTER 3: The Song of The Vertical Field, 2002 (detail)

biological course traced by the *Cremaster* cycle, the third phase is one of reassessment, of traveling halfway on the path toward differentiation and recognizing the fact that self-imposed resistance, no matter how powerful, cannot prevent the inexorable division of the sexes. Acceptance, however, is not a passive state: it represents a shoring up of internal resources for the battles between entropy and growth that lie ahead. The most self-reflexive of the cycle's chapters, *Cremaster 3* occupies a space of narcissism. It folds all the other sections into its narrative structure, as if they had been born there and then had flowed outward from this central core. Set largely in New York City, where Barney lives and works, the film is in essence a distillation of his major themes and signature aesthetic devices, filtered through an elaborate symbolic matrix involving Freemasonry, Celtic lore, and Art Deco desires.

The trope of division so critical to the *Cremaster* cycle as a whole is understood in this chapter as a sociopolitical construct through a story line involving Irish labor unions and organized crime in Depression-era New York. The colors of the Irish national flag—orange and green—pervade the scenography. Introduced in 1848 as an emblem of the Young Ireland Movement, the flag symbolized a fusion of perceived opposites: the green represented the older Gaelic and Anglo-Norman faction of the country; the orange signified the Protestant population; and the white between them an everlasting peace.[68] Barney uses the combination of, or partition between, these colors as a structural element throughout the project—much as he uses the blue and yellow palette of *Cremaster 4*. Partitioning is also a model for the ritualized processes of introspection associated with Freemasonry, which professes personal transcendence through the idea of separating from and killing off one's lower self; a Masonic candidate must "lose his life to save it."[69]

In *Cremaster 3* Barney fuses together these varied references as so much raw material with which to fabricate a fantastical account of the construction of the Chrysler Building. And like the Masonic lodge, which, as symbolic architecture, represents the sacred temple within every worthy candidate, Barney's Chrysler tower is itself a character.[70] This extravagant folly of a building—a "paroxysm of detail"—is the personification of inner potential.[71] The progression of its erection symbolizes the fortification of self through the perfectly disciplined will, a process described in a remark by the legendary football coach Vince Lombardi that serves as the epigram for the film: "Character is the integration of habits of conduct superimposed on temperament. It is the will exercised on disposition, thought, emotion, and action. Will is the character in action."[72] As in his pre-*Cremaster* works, Barney invests an architectural space with psychological and physiological depths. The Chrysler Building becomes an organism, host to inner, antagonistic forces at play for control of and access to the process of (spiritual)

68. The designer of the Irish flag, Thomas Francis Meagher, stated that "our tri-colour, my friends, will be this: A tri-colour orange, white, and green. This we will present to the Irish people. The white would symbolize the peace between the green of the Catholics and the orange of the Protestants." Reg. A. Watson, *The Life and Times of Thomas Francis Meagher* (Tasmania, Australia: Anglo-Saxon-Keltic Society, 1996), p. 8.

69. W. L. Wilmshurst, *The Meaning of Masonry* (New York: Grammercy Books, 1980), p. 126.

70. "Man himself is a lodge. And just as the Masonic Lodge is 'an assemblage of brethren and fellows met to expiate upon the mysteries of the Craft, so individual man is a composite being made up of various properties and faculties assembled together in him with a view to their harmonious interaction. . . . A man's first entry into a Lodge is symbolical of his first entry upon the science of knowing himself. His organism is symbolized by a four-square or four-sided building. . . . The East of the Lodge represents man's spirituality. . . . The West (or polar opposite of the East) represents his normal rational understanding." Ibid., pp. 91–92.

71. "Paroxysm of detail" is Rem Koolhaas's description of the Chrysler Building, in *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, 1978 (reprint ed. New York: The Monacelli Press, 1994), p. 129.

72. Vince Lombardi, quoted in David Maraniss, *When Pride Still Mattered: A Life of Vince Lombardi* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), p. 406. Lombardi goes on to say, "The character, rather than education, is man's greatest need and man's greatest safeguard, because character is higher than intellect. While it is true the difference between men is in energy, in the strong will, in the settled purpose and in the invincible determination, the new leadership is in sacrifice, it is in self-denial. . . . This gentlemen, is the distinction between great and little men."

transcendence. These factions find form in the struggle between the Architect, Hiram Abiff (played by Richard Serra), and the Entered Apprentice (played by Barney), who participate in a hubristic relationship defined by betrayal, punishment, and revenge. Both characters are working on the creation of the building, its design and construction respectively. The narrative of the film follows their ascent through the tower.

The Architect and the Apprentice are reenacting the Masonic myth of Hiram Abiff, purported chief architect of Solomon's Temple, who possessed knowledge of the secret mysteries of the universe. Biblical accounts of the Temple make no mention of the name "Hiram Abiff," but do refer to a Hiram of Tyre, a skilled craftsman hired by Solomon to embellish the Temple structure with metalwork. This Hiram cast the two monumental, freestanding brass pillars that flanked the east vestibule of the Temple.[73] Measuring some twenty-seven feet in height and six feet in depth, these columns were named Jachin, which is thought to mean "He establishes," and Boaz, which is believed to mean "In Him is strength."[74] According to Masonic legend, this same Hiram of Tyre/Hiram Abiff was accosted by three apprentice stonemasons who demanded that he divulge the secret name of God. When he refused, they killed him with a blow to the forehead with a setting maul, then hastily buried his body. When the body was found, King Solomon disinterred it, using the grip of a Master Mason, which incorporates the Five Points of Fellowship: foot is placed to foot, knee to knee, breast to breast, hand to back, and mouth to ear. So embraced, Hiram Abiff came back to life and whispered the phrase "*Maha byn*," an untranslatable term that stands as a surrogate for the words of divine knowledge lost at Abiff's death, much as the Hebrew word "Jahweh" is a surrogate for the name of God.

Production photograph from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

The murder, burial, and resurrection of Hiram Abiff are reenacted during Masonic initiation rites as the culmination of a three-part process through which a candidate progresses from the first degree of Entered Apprenticeship, to the second of Fellowcraft, to the third of Master Mason.[75] A sacramental brotherhood devoted to the pursuit of inner truth, Freemasonry is premised on an elaborate allegorical system rooted in the vocabularies of architecture, geometry, and ancient mystery. In Freemasonry's use of architectural phraseology, which both conceals and communicates its spiritual teachings, Barney discovered an analogue to his own hermetic structures. He adopted its language as yet another vessel through which to explore internal thresholds and the application of will. Masonic symbols permeate *Cremaster 3*, adding yet another interpretive level to the cycle's already multivalent coded system.

The core of the film takes place in 1930. That year, Prohibition was still law; organized crime—the Syndicate—had infiltrated organized labor in

73. On Hiram of Tyre, see 1 Kings chapter 7. Hiram also cast an enormous brass cistern mounted on a circle of twelve life-sized bronze bulls, which symbolized the twelve tribes of Israel under the tutelage of King Solomon. See 1 Kings 7:23, 25. This cistern was the model for the Mormon Temple baptismal font that inspired Barney's ceremonial bison circle in the execution scene in *Cremaster 2*. His subsequent conflation of Masonic and Mormon symbolism in the *Cremaster* cycle reflects the historical overlapping of the two doctrines. Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, was a Freemason and borrowed freely from its rites for Mormon services.

74. Translations of the names of the two columns vary from source to source. One history of King Solomon argues that the names derive from dynastic oracles inscribed in Hebrew on each pillar: the Jachin oracle read "Yahweh will establish . . . your throne forever" and the Boaz oracle read "In Yahweh is the king's strength." See http://www.theology.edu/lec17.htm. Christopher Knight and Robert Lomas argue that the Boaz pillar, meaning "Strength or in it is strength," was named after the great-grandfather of David, King of Israel, and the Jachin, meaning "to establish," was dedicated to a high priest of the temple. See *The Hiram Key: Pharaohs, Freemasons and the Discovery of the Scrolls of Jesus* (Shaftesbury, Dorset; Boston; Melbourne, Victoria: Element, 1997), pp. 7–8.

75. For the story of Hiram Abiff as it is reenacted during Masonic initiation rites, see Knight and Lomas, *The Hiram Key*, pp. 8–18.

Manhattan; there were some 260 Masonic lodges in the city,[76] forty-seven thousand Irish immigrants had settled since 1925,[77] and the Chrysler Building was nearing completion. Commissioned by automobile magnate Walter P. Chrysler for his corporate headquarters, the skyscraper was intended to be the tallest man-made structure on Earth. But when another building under construction—the Bank of Manhattan Tower, a 927-foot-high, sixty-six-story edifice on Wall Street—threatened to surpass the Chrysler Building's initial 925-foot, sixty-five-story design, architect Van Alen and his patron Chrysler schemed to construct, in secret, an additional 180-foot, needle-thin Nirosta-steel spire inside the tower and to hoist it in place through the building's crown. The Chrysler Building won the battle for altitude; a promotional brochure of the period proclaimed that "Into the empyrean, the builder has flung his handiwork seeking to pierce the ever-unfathomable blue above."[78]

Cremaster 3 begins with a prologue steeped in ancient Celtic mythology. The scene opens with an aerial view of the Irish Sea. Two rock formations on either side of the sea—Fingal's Cave, on the Isle of Staffa, and the Giant's Causeway, on the coast of northern Ireland—harbor a story in their identical geology, a dramatic structure of naturally formed hexagonal basalt columns: this is the legend of the Irish giant Fionn MacCumhail, or Finn MacCool, who challenges the Scottish giant Fingal[79] to a fight. As a bridge for his opponent to come from Scotland, he builds the Causeway and extends it out to sea, but as Fingal approaches, the thunderous vibrations of his steps reveal that he is twice MacCumhail's size. The Irish giant's wife, Oonagh, dressed in blue tartan with legs hewn from peat and moss, strategizes how to save his life. Learning that Fingal's Achilles' heel is his brass finger, the secret of his strength, she urges her husband to dress as a baby and bake twenty-one loaves of bread, each with a cast-iron frying pan baked into its heart. In Barney's version each loaf contains a white plastic wedge—the kind used by the fairies to prop up the Hack's tires in *Cremaster 4*. The prologue ends once the preparations are in place and a disguised MacCumhail lies waiting in an enormous cradle for Fingal's imminent arrival.

The main narrative begins deep below the earth, under the foundation of the partially constructed Chrysler Building, on the site of an ancient goat-burial ground. An emaciated female corpse—killed by four shots to the heart—is attempting to dig her way out of a cavernous grave. She is the undead Gary Gilmore, transubstantiated into a woman through a successful metamorphosis achieved in the space of Houdini.[80] Her haunting return marks the transition from *Cremaster 2* to *3*, from the horizontal ending within the recesses of a glacier to the vertical orientation of the Chrysler tower. This bloodied, putrefying incarnation of Gilmore is a portent of evil to come. Unable to stand unassisted, she is carried out of her tomb by five

Video still from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

76. In 1932, the closest date for which I can locate an exact figure, there were 262 Masonic lodges in New York City. See *Polk's New York City Classified Business Directory 1933–34* (New York: E. L. Polk & Company, 1932), pp. 3885–86, under section entitled "Societies Benevolent and Fraternal—Masonic."

77. Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1972), p. 94.

78. Quoted from cover of promotional booklet *The Chrysler Building* (New York: Chrysler Tower Corporation, 1930). The building was the tallest in the world for a few short months before it was surpassed by the Empire State Building, also completed in 1930.

79. In traditional versions of this legend, the Scottish giant's name is Benandonner. But Barney has changed his name to Fingal after the cave in which he dwells. Fingal is a late corruption of Finn MacCool, and Barney's use of it implies a correlation between the two giants, as if they were two sides of the same being, much in the way the main characters in *Cremaster 3*, Hiram Abiff and the Entered Apprentice, mirror one another in the narrative. The titles of Barney's character vitrines related to *Cremaster 3* attest to this reading: *Fingal: The Case of Hiram Abiff* (2002) and *Fionn MacCumhail: The Case of the Entered Apprentice* (2002). Also, the "play within a play" sensibility of this mythological digression in the film parallels *Cremaster 4*'s fairy sequences, in which the basic conflicts of the narrative are enacted but without the psychological undertow experienced by the main characters. For more on the derivation of Fingal, see www.ealaghol.demon.co.uk/celtenc/celt_f2.htm.

80. While Gilmore may have escaped the status of drone, his death evidently brought no peace, for it is the curse of the zombie to wander the earth forever, without release from terrestrial bonds.

CREMASTER 3: Imperial New Yorker, 2002 (detail)

boys—a family of undertakers—who transport her up a series of increasingly refined staircases that culminate in the Chrysler Building's ornate, marble-drenched lobby.[81] Crossing this space, the pallbearers deposit the corpse in the back seat of a Chrysler Imperial New Yorker. Introduced on July 1, 1930, the Imperial is Chrysler's premier luxury car; the New Yorker is a style within this deluxe line. Here it is customized with an interior of plush green velvet. A golden eagle perches on the headrest of the front seat.

During this scene of disinterment, the camera cross-cuts to tightly cropped images of the Entered Apprentice troweling cement over carved Nirosta-steel fuel-tank caps on the rear chassis of five 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperials, each bearing the insignia of a *Cremaster* episode. The colors of the cars likewise represent the respective predominant palettes of each of the five *Cremaster* installments: silver, aqua, green, blue, and black.[82] Packed with cement, these caps will serve as battering rams in a demolition derby about to begin in the Chrysler Building lobby. Here the lobby receptionist gets up from her Nirosta-steel desk to wave a flag indicating the start of the tournament. The '67 Imperials encircle the New Yorker like hunters around an animal in a snare. As outlaws or partners in crime—for Imperials are the only model of car forbidden from competing in demolition derbies—they proceed to pulverize their victim in what appears to be a ritual killing.[83] While the cars are attacking their prey, the Apprentice slips away unnoticed and enters one of the building's twelve elevator shafts, which he proceeds to scale until he reaches an elevator cabin resting between floors. He climbs on top of it and lowers himself inside. Lighting a cigarette, he intentionally triggers the sprinkler system. As the cabin begins to fill with water, he starts pouring cement, using the car as a mold with which to cast the perfect ashlar: a symmetrically hewn stone of superior quality, traditionally used for monumental projects like cathedrals. In Freemasonry the ashlar is one of the most important symbols encountered during the rituals of the First Degree. An Entered Apprentice is taught that "by the rough ashlar we are reminded of our rude and imperfect state by nature, by the perfect ashlar, of that state of perfection at which we hope to arrive."[84] In some Masonic lodges, newly initiated Apprentices are asked to chisel a piece of rough ashlar to signify their readiness to learn the ways of the craft.

Production photograph from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

By circumventing the carving process and using a shortcut to create the perfect ashlar block, the Entered Apprentice has cheated in his rites of passage. He has laid a false foundation for the development of his character, and he has sabotaged the construction of the building. For this act of insolence he must be punished. Officials of the Syndicate—three cigar-smoking Master Masons, complete with aprons and architectural tools—meet to determine his fate. They gather in the Chrysler Building's Cloud Club bar, on the

81. Though Barney filmed on location in the upper floors of the Chrysler Building, he created 1:1 replicas of the lobby, the Cloud Club bar, and a dentist's office, taking certain liberties along the way.

82. The anachronistic inclusion of 1967 Imperials is a nod toward the work's narcissistic tenor: this is the year of the artist's birth. The demolition derby that will ensue, with the '67 Imperials attacking the '30s New Yorker (the date of which references the birth of the artist's own father), is an enactment of the paternal conflict that informs the entire film.

83. Along with hearses and limousines, Chrysler Imperials are prohibited from participating in general demolition-derby competitions because of the strength of their construction and the power of their engines. See Wakefield, "Imperial 1967," an entry in "The Cremaster Glossary," p. 102, which cites Ed Becker, "Demolition Derby," 1997, at http://www.demoderby.com/demofaq.htm.

84. Harold Meij, "The Ashlar," at http://www3.tky.3web.ne.jp/~jafarr/The%20Ashlar.htm, a Web site devoted to explicating the esoteric symbols invoked in Freemasonry. In his artist's book and *Cremaster 3* lyrics, Barney has chosen to use the archaic spelling of the word: "ashler."

sixty-sixth floor. The club is modeled to invoke the aura of an Irish pub, albeit with distinctly Art Deco touches.[85] The passage between its airy dining room and its wood-paneled bar features tight partitions demarcating the small private booths that in Ireland are called "snugs," rooms originally designed to integrate women into the country's otherwise all-male drinking establishments and later employed as clandestine meeting rooms for members of the IRA.[86] Here the Masons assemble. The carpeted floor of the bar area is divided into two panels—orange and green—on which are superimposed two field emblems. On the orange panel the field emblem is green, and within it are embroidered the symbolic Masonic tools (maul, plumb, square, and level). On the green panel the field emblem is orange and contains the image of a Celtic harp. The bar, with its scalloped Deco lights and stools crafted from compasses, is partly constructed from frozen Vaseline.

After filling the elevator cabin with concrete so that it exceeds the weight of its counterbalance and falls to the bottom of the shaft, the Apprentice enters the Cloud Club, where he is greeted by the Maitre d', played by Irish tenor Paul Brady. Pulling copper cords out of the shaft and affixing them to the directional indicator above the door, the Apprentice makes an elevator into a harp. The Maitre d' also creates a wind organ by placing stone wedges at points in the three elevators' doors. He plays a ballad of the building on this organ, singing in Gaelic,

> On dried skull and thigh bones,
> A goat grave horizon
> With flat feet of hard stone,
> Rough ashlar foundation
>
> This is the song of the vertical field,
> A promising plumb line draped down from the skyline
>
> New beacon, lone witness,
> Base, pillar, pediment,
> A gauging of character,
> Geometry yields judgement
>
> This is the song of the vertical field,
> A towering implement indicates level
> With purest precision, this level shall measure
>
> Gleaming steel arches
> Chrome eagle perches

Video still from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

85. During the Prohibition era, the Cloud Club was an exclusively male speakeasy for the social elite.

86. "The snug was the only place in an authentic Irish pub that ladies could frequent. It was completely separated from the rest of the pub and had its own entrance and windows. The bartender had a small window to pass drinks to the women who were not allowed to be in the same area as the men." Quoted from Conor O'Neill's Traditional Irish Pub tour, www.conoroneills.com/co/tour5.htm. By the mid-nineteenth century, women were ubiquitously drinking in snugs in Ireland so as to be separate from the men in the bar. Also by the mid-nineteenth century, Fenian circles, an Irish nationalist brotherhood, were known to gather in pubs. See Elizabeth Malcolm, "The Rise of the Pub: A Study in the Disciplining of Popular Culture," *Irish Popular Culture 1650–1850*, eds. James S. Donnelly, Jr. and Kerby A. Miller (Dublin and Portland: Irish Academic Press, 1998), pp. 50–77. And by the 1920s and 1930s, secret meetings of the IRA were held in the private snugs of certain sympathetic pubs. See, Kevin C. Kearns, *Dublin Pub Life and Lore: An Oral History* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1996), p. 38.

Video stills from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

All in reflection
The problem in question
This is the song of the vertical field,
The reflection in question, of unsquare detection

White orchid, seed's cycle,
Ice lily, glacial still
Manx gorse, narcissus,
Calla lil', all blooming once

This is the song of the vertical field,
Once upright, this field is now fertile and prone
With desire put forth for a field that will flower,
One narcissus blooms in this untruthful tower

The sound of this Irish air corresponds to on-screen scenes of the building under construction, which are shown intermittently as cutaway shots throughout the film. Workers are seen applying steel cladding to the stone and metal infrastructure. An eagle gargoyle is fitted into place. Scaffolding retreats as the curtain wall is completed. The needle is hoisted into place.

While the Maitre d' plays his song, the Apprentice slips into the bar area, bypassing the trio of Masons, whose meeting is guarded by a watchman. He sits and smokes for a while in one of the lounges, then proceeds to the bar and orders a Guinness stout. The ensuing scene is a surreal, protracted slapstick routine between bartender and Apprentice. Almost everything goes wrong; and these humorous mishaps—falls, spills, broken glass, burst kegs, etc.—result in this court jester of a bartender playing his environment like a bagpipe. The various accidents leading up to his orchestration of the kegs, pumps, and hoses are caused by a woman in an adjoining snug, who is cutting potatoes into pentagonal wedges with blades on her shoes and stuffing them under the foundation of the bar until it is no longer level. Dressed in ethereal chain mail, like some hybrid Celtic archetype of agriculture and warfare, she seems to be the Chrysler Tower's unconscious. Sitting silently in her white cubicle of a room, ritualistically slicing potatoes to set the bar and, by extension, the tower off-center, she signals that all is not well with the building. The result of her actions is registered by the Masons in the other snug, who use a plumb line and level to assess the evenness of the situation.

This interlude is interrupted by a scene shift to Saratoga Springs, in upstate New York, once a popular site among members of the Syndicate who needed to hide from the police when the pressure was on.[87] The Apprentice and his moll—played by the same woman seen cutting potatoes in the bar—

87. See Burton Turkus and Sid Feder, *Murder, Inc: The Story of "The Syndicate"* (Garden City, N.Y.: Permabooks, 1952), p. 17.

are on the backstretch of the Saratoga racetrack watching a harness race. Five teams of two horses each are competing; the jockeys wear satin jackets, each with one of the *Cremaster* insignias emblazoned on its back. *Cremaster 5* is in the lead, followed by an aggressive *Cremaster 3*. But as the horses round the track, it becomes clear that they are all dead: sinewy flesh hangs off the bone, veins and arteries are exposed, blood pools beneath the hoofs. This ghostly race comes to an end with *Cremaster 5* crossing the finish line, but an inquiry is immediately called, because the team has performed a foul on *Cremaster 1*. With *5* disqualified, the *3* team wins the race, and is crowned with a blanket of narcissus.

In the meantime the Apprentice and his moll have fled the zombie track, but not quickly enough. Three hitmen intercept them and force the Apprentice into a tunnel under the track. Here they place in his mouth a silver snaffle, made from two interlocking trowels inscribed with the Masonic square and compass—symbols for morality and justice. Pulling the attached reins taut, they smash his teeth into a railing.[88] The Apprentice is next seen back in the Cloud Club, his mouth mutilated and bleeding. The hitmen escort him into the elevator and take him to a dental office on the seventy-first floor, where he is stripped of his workman's garb. Beneath it he is wearing the costume of the First Degree Masonic initiate, part of which used to be worn by medieval heretics condemned to the gallows;[89] the cloth on the left leg and right arm is rolled up and the right breast is exposed. First Degree candidates also wear aprons of pure white lambskin, signifying the innocence of the newborn child and the state of man before the Fall; accordingly an apron of flesh obtrudes from the Apprentice's navel, covering his lower abdomen. Masonic lore associates the apron with human corporeality; it represents the ephemeral and all-too-mortal body, the great equalizer. As a symbol it is a constant reminder of man's original innocence, the perpetual threat of corruption surrounding him, and the level of personal perfection he can aspire to within the Masonic order.[90] When the Apprentice is helped into the dental chair, one of the hitmen lifts this apron to reveal, in place of genitals, a frozen splash pattern formed by a drop of water falling into a pool of liquid. Like Gilmore's truncated penis, this abstraction functions as an allusion to the *Cremaster* project's overarching biological metaphor. While the Apprentice may be a candidate for only the Second Degree, and is thus still morally undeveloped, he is also, within Barney's symbology, part of an organism struggling with its internal formation. In preparation for the dentist, another of the hitmen melts a sheet of plastic and places it over the Apprentice's face, leaving open an aperture for his trauma of a mouth.

One flight up from the dental suite, on the building's top floor, is the office of the Chief Architect. An elegant Art Deco interior, this chamber is the nerve

Video stills from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

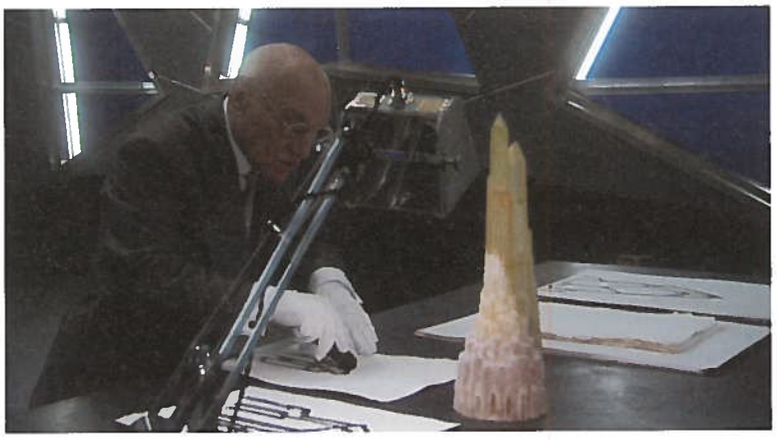
Video still from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

88. The symbols of Freemasonry are taken from the stonemason's tools. The trowel represents the process of cementing bonds among Masonic brethren. The square teaches "us to regulate our lives and actions by the Masonic rule and line, and so to correct and harmonize our conduct as to render us acceptable to the Divine Being, from Whom all goodness emanates." Compasses "remind us of the Divine Being's unerring and impartial justice." Trevor W. McKeown, "A Masonic Overview," http://www.freemasonry.bcy.ca/Writings/MasonicOverview.html.

89. See Knight and Lomas, *The Hiram Key*, p. 5.

90. "Need I say that the physical form with which we have all been invested by the Creator upon entrance into this world, and of which we will divest ourselves when we leave the Lodge of life, is represented among us by our Masonic Apron? This, our body of mortality, this veil of flesh and blood clothing the inner soul of us, this is the real 'badge of innocence,' the common 'bond of friendship,' with which the Great Architect has been pleased to invest us all." Wilmshurst, *The Meaning of Masonry*, p. 31.

Video still from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002



center of the tower, which is in construction all around it, as intermittent shots of scaffolding and steelwork have shown. The Architect is thus drawing the building as it unfolds in space. He refers to models of skyscrapers on the console beside him—three-dimensional renderings of the work of Hugh Ferriss, the architectural illustrator of the 1920 and '30s who produced a well-known body of charcoal studies for a visionary metropolis. Here Barney beautifully conflates the fictional character of the Architect, the historical figure of Ferriss, and the living artist Serra. This reading finds support in a description of Ferriss' 1929 book *The Metropolis of Tomorrow* by the architect Rem Koolhaas, who makes an association between Ferriss' jet-black studies (one thinks here of Serra's oilstick drawings), the notion of an architectural womb, and the idea of overcoming a paternal artistic lineage. Koolhaas imagines a state of creativity entirely germane to the *Cremaster* cycle:

> The genius of Ferriss' production is in the medium of his renderings itself, the creation of an artificial night that leaves all architectural incidents vague and ambitious in a mist of charcoal particles that thickens or thins whenever necessary. Ferriss' most important contribution to the theory of Manhattan is exactly the creation of an illuminated night inside a cosmic container, the murky *Ferrissian Void*: a pitch black architectural womb that gives birth to the consecutive stages of the Skyscraper in a sequence of sometimes overlapping pregnancies, and that promises to generate ever-new ones. Each of Ferriss' drawings records a moment of that never-ending gestation. The promiscuity of the Ferrissian womb blurs the issue of paternity.[91]

91. Koolhaas, *Delirious New York*, p. 117.

The passage also invokes the narcissistic dimensions of *Cremaster 3*, putting into relief Barney's own relationship to Serra's sculptural practice—a point that cannot be dismissed in an analysis of the project.

As we return to the narrative, the Architect descends from his studio down a spiral staircase into the dental lab to confront his opponent. He is carrying the compressed remains of the Imperial New Yorker, which the lobby receptionist has deposited on his desk. In a scene reminiscent of the penal dental surgery in Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985), the Architect fits a pair of dentures into the Apprentice's vacant mouth. This set of gleaming metal false teeth has been fashioned from the remains of the crushed Imperial, which had once been branded with the imprint of the five *Cremaster* insignia (from the Nirosta-steel fuel caps mounted on the cars that crushed it). The moment the teeth click into place, the Apprentice's intestines prolapse through his rectum. This ceremonious disembowelment symbolically separates him from his lower self. For his hubris he is simultaneously punished and redeemed by the Architect—whose own hubris equally knows no bounds.

Production photograph from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

Returning to his office, and anxious about the tower's slow progress, the Architect constructs two columns from large black plates that he lifts into place with a chain hoist: one set of plates is in the shape of a halved field emblem, the other is a pentagon. These eccentric pillars allude to the columns, Jachin and Boaz, that Hiram Abiff designed for Solomon's Temple—potent symbols in Masonic practice.[92] The Architect is constructing his own temple. Meanwhile the Apprentice's broken and dislodged teeth stream out of his intestines in a river of goo, spilling through an indentation in the dental chair to a tray below, where they fall into a line and slowly melt together to form a smooth porcelain rod. His apron of flesh also lengthens to below his groin, marking his passage from Entered Apprentice to Master Mason—an equal of the Architect. He escapes from the dental lab through a panel in the ceiling and begins an ascent to the topmost region of the tower, crawling upward in the space between its steel skin and its metal frame.

Video still from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

The Architect uses his columns as a ladder and climbs through an oculus in the ceiling (much as did the spire, which rose to secure the building's ascendancy in the contest for the sky). His aspirations—to reach ever higher, to hew the perfect stone, to dominate the Lodge within himself, to be *the* reflection in the mirror of the building—are the desires of the demiurge. Hubris incarnate, the Architect is attempting to become god on Earth.[93] The next scene describes an apotheosis, the Architect becoming one with his design. This takes place in the room directly beneath the building's spire. Part observation deck, part surveillance zone (replete with antennae), this space is redolent of omnipotence; it is the all-seeing eye on top of the Masonic

92. *A Mason's Examination* (1723) asks "Where was the first Lodge kept?" and answers, "In Solomon's Porch; the two Pillars were called Jachin and Boaz." See http://www.nels.com/mason/systb52.html.

93. "The evolution of man into superman . . . was always the purpose of the ancient Mysteries, and the real purpose of modern Masonry is, not the social and charitable purposes to which so much attention is paid, but the expediting of the spiritual evolution of those who aspire to perfect their own nature and transform it into a more god-like quality." Wilmshurst, *The Meaning of Masonry*, p. 47.

Video stills from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

pyramid, the central point of a panopticon from which to observe and control the metropolis below. The floor here rises in the center, like an ancient Celtic burial mound. A modern Newgrange or Tara, the mound is covered with mossy grass. The Architect stands on its summit, holding clusters of flowers that correspond to the five *Cremaster* episodes: white orchid (*Cremaster 1*), Rocky Mountain sage (*Cremaster 2*), narcissus (*Cremaster 3*), Irish gorse (*Cremaster 4*), and calla lily (*Cremaster 5*). He wears a black apron, in which are fitted the Mason's sacred tools. On a floor below, twenty construction workers have leaned out of open windows to catch pale green ribbons spilling down from the top of the spire. Tossing the ribbons to one another in an aerial choreography, these men perform a kind of maypole dance until the spire is wrapped entirely in green satin. The ends of the ribbons are then fed up through the ceiling to the room of the Celtic mound, where the Architect's henchmen, the Syndicate killers, attach them to a system of hooks above his head. The same action is then repeated with orange ribbon, so that, like the building's grand spire, the Architect too is wrapped in green and orange, enshrined in the space of his own making. He gathers the ribbons that spill down around him and weaves them into a two-tone braid, attaching the *Cremaster* flower clusters to form a garland. Standing at the pinnacle of the tower, in the very center of the *Cremaster* cycle, the Architect, as master artist, has complete control—if only for an instant—of his creation.

The ceremony enacted on this indoor druid mound recalls Beltane, the ancient Celtic festival that marked the beginning of summer. The rite, which used to be accompanied by dancing and spirit worship, was customarily celebrated on May 1 (also the day of the maypole dance), and culminated in a sacrificial killing by fire. Since hubris always exacts a sacrifice in retribution, this glorification of the Architect in the temple of his own making may just be his last stand. During this sequence the voice of the Maitre d' is heard singing an anthem that proclaims this fate:

> Of glacial ice, a base of stone
> A firm foundation for potential
> One hopeful line, a gesture still
> Toward higher rationale
>
> So lift this hope to vertical
> And build this pillar sound
> From this stone true, the tower did raise
> From th' grace his basis found

O'er poured stone core, a silver skin
High reflection, this surface takes
All-seeing eye, a mirror thin
Paternal estimation makes

Strong character and refined will
Shall build this pillar sound
With this stone true, the tower did hope
For th' grace his basis found

This willful lens, this reflection,
A deceitful claim to see
No longer square, nor level to
The line plumb to the sea

His pride gone ill this beacon still
Will call this pillar sound
With this stone true, the tower did lie
To th' grace his basis found

A silver sphere, an aqua pool
And the blue sea, deeper black
A stone was thrown, horizon cleft
The truthful curve reborne

The pillar on which pride did rest,
That tower lies now level, prone
With this stone true, the tower did fall
From th' grace his basis found

CREMASTER 3: The Dance of Hiram Abiff, 2002 (detail)

At this point in the narrative the film pauses for a choric interlude, which rehearses the secret initiation rites of the Masonic fraternity through allegorical representations of the five-part *Cremaster* cycle, all in the guise of a game. Staged in the arena-like rotunda of Frank Lloyd Wright's landmark Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, the contest is broadcast via the needle on top of the Chrysler Building. In this sense the game occupies a conceptual space similar to Barney's early performances, which were only viewable on video monitors, to which they were transmitted like televised sports. Though suggestive of activity happening elsewhere simultaneously, these video actions functioned more as proposals about what may or may not have occurred in the space in which they were seen.[94] The game at the

94. Discussing his pre-*Cremaster* work, Barney has said, "In these installations I was working with the model of an audience which is not watching a live situation at all, but the broadcast of an activity that's going on simultaneously somewhere else. Something had happened in that space in which you stand and the video functioned as a proposal for what that may or may not have been." Quoted in Sans, "Matthew Barney: Modern Heroes," p. 31.

Production stills from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

Guggenheim—called "the Order"—raises analogous questions, seeming as much like a dream sequence as like the broadcast of a live event. Its one contestant is a fantastical incarnation of the Entered Apprentice, identifiable through his bruised and bloodied mouth. His flesh apron has transmogrified into a full-length skin-colored kilt, its tartan pattern formed by the blue and red vessels of the circulatory system.

The famed spiraling architecture of the Guggenheim has often been compared to a beehive, and in the context of the Order this reference takes on a particular symbolic valence. As we have seen, the beehive and its interior hexagonal honeycomb pattern also appear as visual leitmotivs in *Cremaster 2*, for it is the state emblem of Utah and an important symbol for the Church of Latter-Day Saints. In *Cremaster 3* the beehive-as-Guggenheim relates to Masonic lore, where it signifies industriousness and communal allegiance. According to the Masonic book of rites, or "Monitor," when a candidate attains the Third Degree of Master Mason he is given a beehive as a "hieroglyphical emblem," meaning that its symbolism within Freemasonry is revealed to him: "The Bee Hive is an emblem of industry, and recommends the practice of that virtue to all created beings, from the highest seraph in heaven to the lowest reptile in the dust. It teaches us that we come into the world rational and intelligent beings, so we should ever be industrious ones; never sitting down content while our fellow creatures around us are in want, especially when it is in our power to relieve them without inconvenience to ourselves."[95] The well-documented historical link between Mormonism and Freemasonry—Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, was inducted into the Masonic fraternity on March 15, 1842[96]—only enriches the symbolic matrix of the *Cremaster* cycle, the conceptual link between the religion and the fraternal society, and also, through the beehive trope, with the Guggenheim, further demonstrating the fluidity of the artist's representational system. For Barney the architecture of the museum's rotunda creates a hivelike atmosphere, and within this space he envisioned a microcosm of the entire cycle, and rendered it in the form of the Order. This articulation of each installment on the curving ramps of the building in turn served him as a 1:1 scale model for the exhibition of the complete *Cremaster* cycle to be held at the museum in 2003. "The Guggenheim," Barney explains, "has always functioned for me like a hive. It is a place where a honeycomb could be built to systematize the individual parts and make a whole. This is realized in the Order, which is a chorus of the *Cremaster* tribes, and where the adhesive jelly between the levels is stronger than the individual levels. The 'Order' sequence in the film is a model of, or rehearsal for, the *Cremaster* cycle exhibition."[97]

The Order is structured as a pentathlon—the athletic contest, consisting of five discrete events, that originated in the Olympic games of ancient

95. Thomas D. Worrel, "The Symbolism of the Beehive and the Bee," at http://www.abaris.net/freemasonry/beehive.htm. In this transcript of a lecture given at the Mill Valley Masonic Lodge on February 29, 2000, Worrel quotes from a Masonic "Monitor" and speculates that the early stonemasons and cathedral builders would have identified with the communal practices of bees, which construct their hive as both a fortress and a source of nourishment. He points out that in early Masonic writings the Lodge is called a "hive," and any group defections from one Lodge to another are called "swarming."

96. See Smith, *History of the Church*, vol. 4, p. 551, excerpted at http://www.irr.org/mit/masonry.html. Under the date of March 15, 1842, Smith writes, "In the evening I received the first degree in Free Masonry in the Nauvoo Lodge, assembled in my general business office." The record for the next day reads, "I was with the Masonic Lodge and rose to the sublime degree" (p. 552). See also Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-Day Saints* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 55, for an account of the establishment of a Masonic lodge in Nauvoo, Illinois, in 1841, amid an early center of Mormonism.

97. Barney, correspondence with the author, January 2, 2002.

Video still from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

Greece. Barney's events are organized as five "levels" on the museum's ascending ramps; the Apprentice must advance from the ground floor to the top of the spiral, passing through each level and confronting its obstacles. This arduous game is a race, for the Apprentice must complete all his tasks within a specified period of time. For the purposes of the film the lyrical circular space of Wright's rotunda is transformed into an architectural concordance to the *Cremaster* cycle, becoming at once stadium, theater, broadcast studio, and museum of memorabilia. The rotunda floor is covered in *Cremaster 1*'s blue Astroturf, which immediately translates the space into a playing field. White athletic padding runs along the tops of the spiral's parapet wall. Barney's field emblem graces the oculus. And banners for each *Cremaster* installment fly from the museum's vertical axis, the "spine" of the atrium. The atmosphere borders on kitsch in its emulation of televised sport: game show meets the NFL or, perhaps more aptly, *Let's Make a Deal* meets *American Gladiator*.

In a preview of the race itself each of the Apprentice's opponents appears on a revolving stage on the rotunda floor. The stage is turned by five high-heeled hostesses, sporting sequined G-strings and pasties, who inhabit the museum's reflecting pool, which has been transformed into a champagne bubble bath. The opponents appear in ascending order in correspondence to the chronology of the *Cremaster* cycle. Level One is the Order of the Rainbow for Girls, a troupe of Masonic girl scouts who perform precision tap dancing.[98] Conflating the showgirls of *Cremaster 1* with the Masonic First Degree, Barney has costumed this ensemble in little-lamb outfits complete with ears, tails, fishnet stockings, and hoofed tap shoes. Level Two comprises the New York hardcore bands Agnostic Front and Murphy's Law, who play on cast-salt stages to a mosh pit full of punk fans. Their raw musical energy and

98. Although the Masonic fraternities are only for men, there are many subsidiary Masonic groups for women, such as Job's Daughter and the Rainbow for Girls.

Video stills from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

antagonistic stance correspond to the sensibility of *Cremaster 2*, which has its share of heavy metal music and salt. Their connection to the Masonic Second Degree will become clear in the puzzle that the Apprentice must solve before leaving this Level and the lyrics of the song they sing in battle with one another.[99]

Cremaster 3 and the Third Degree are represented on the next Level by the double amputee, Paralympic track star, and fashion model Aimee Mullins. Her character, known as the Entered Novitiate, will mutate from a couture model dressed in a white gown and crystal legs to a hybrid Egyptian warrior whose lower body is that of a cheetah. Mullins plays many roles in *Cremaster 3*; an elasticity in her character allows for endless permutation. She has already been seen as Oonagh, the Apprentice's Moll, and the potato-cutting woman in the Cloud Club bar. In the Order, however, where she represents the third *Cremaster* episode and the Third Degree (the ultimate level achieved in Freemasonry), Mullins has a pivotal role: she is, in essence, the Apprentice's (and Barney's) alter ego. *Cremaster 3* is the narcissistic center of the cycle; it resonates with references to the project as a whole, and to Barney's position as its author. As a professional athlete and model, Mullins already echoes aspects of the artist's own biography. Also, her gleaming carbon-fiber prosthetic legs—designed for running, premised on the mechanics of a cheetah's foot—recall the legs that Barney wore in *Drawing Restraint 7*, and make her a female satyr. When the Apprentice/Barney confronts her on Level Three, he is facing himself in all his guises—the prerequisite of the Third Degree.

The opponent on Level Four is an enlarged and abstracted bagpipe, whose bag is made out of a four-horned, flayed Loughton Ram (here cast in white plastic). A breed indigenous to the Isle of Man, this sheep figures prominently in *Cremaster 4*. Its correlation to Masonic ritual is threefold. First, as a grown lamb, it alludes to degrees beyond the third, Master Mason level, of which there are many gradations.[100] Second, the outline of the flayed animal corresponds to the configuration created when two Masons perform the Five Points of Fellowship. And finally, as a bagpipe—recalling the hubristic associations of the bagpipe in *OTTOshaft* (1992)—it equates the Masonic drive for inner perfection with demiurgic impulses. Richard Serra—now appearing not as the Architect but as himself—constitutes Level Five, which symbolizes even higher echelons of moral rectitude within Masonic thought. He is the personification of the male element, the fully descended entity witnessed in *Cremaster 5*. Dressed in protective clothing and gas mask, Serra hurls molten Vaseline against propped plates of prosthetic plastic on the top ramp of the Guggenheim's rotunda.[101] He thereby sets the clock for the Order: the loose Vaseline runs down a trough on the sloping ramps,

99. The lyrics are sung at first by each band leader (call), then by the band (band), and then by the kids in the mosh pit (response): Murphy's Law Call: *From East to West the soul her journey take at many bitter founts her fever slakes* / M L Response: *Back to the East* / M L Call: *Halts at strange taverns by the way to the feast resumes her load, and painful progress makes* / M L Response: *Back to the East* / Agnostic Front Call: *An ever moaning battle, battle in the mist,* / A F Band: *Death,* / A F Response: *In all life* / A F Band: *Lying,* / A F Response: *In all love* / A F Call: *The meanest having power, power upon the highest and the high purpose broken by the worm* / A F Response: *Darkness in the West* / A F Band: *West* / A F Call: *Rational understanding* / A F Response: *West* / M L Band: *East* / M L Call: *Spiritual intuition* / M L Response: *East* / A F Band: *Physical sphere* / M L Response: *North* / M L Band: *Abstract sphere* / A F Response: *South* / A F Band: *Three* / M L Response: *Faith* / A F Band: *Strong* / M L Response: *Hope* / A F Band: *Staves* / M L Response: *Mercy* / M L Band: *Three* / A F Response: *Wisdom* / M L Band: *Grand* / A F Response: *Strength* / M L Band: *Pillars* / A F Response: *Beauty* / A F Band: *The perfect cube must pass through* / ALL Response: *I, I, I die daily* / M L Band: *Through the state of the cross* / ALL Response: *I, I, I die daily* / A F Call: *I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I* / ALL Response: *I, I, I, I, I, I, I* / A F + All Response: *Die daily* / M L Call: *I, I, I, I, I, I, I, I* / ALL Response: *I, I, I, I, I, I, I* / M L + All Response: *Die daily* / ALL Response: *I, I, I die daily, I, I, I die daily, I, I, I die daily* . . . (repeating).

100. In Freemasonry, the Blue Lodge confers the first three degrees (Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason). These are the essential rites; any degree earned afterward is merely an elaboration upon the fundamental Masonic principles.

101. In 1968 and '69 Serra experimented with the malleability of lead, creating pieces that directly acknowledged the metal's materiality. It was during the

and the Apprentice must solve all the game's challenges before it reaches the bottom.

The Apprentice first moves through the Levels in ascending order, then returns to tackle tasks not completed or problems unsolved. Scaling the parapet wall, clinging to prosthetic plastic rails as he climbs the hundred-foot spiral, he stops at intervals to play each component of the game. On Level One he passes through a tunnel formed by the high-kicking legs of the Order of the Rainbow and is presented with a baby lamb, which he wears as an apron. Sign of the First Degree, the lamb represents a process of "preparation, self-discipline, and purification."[102] On Level Two the Apprentice must solve a geometric puzzle set into the floor of the mosh pit between the two dueling bands: he must first place the stonemason's tools—which symbolically measure the strength of his character—into the form of a cross, then shape the cross into a perfect cube. This conundrum represents the teachings of Fellowcraft, or the Second Degree: "He who desires to rise to the heights of his own being must first crush and crucify his own lower nature and inclinations; he must perforce tread what elsewhere is described as the way of the Cross; and that Cross is indicated by the conjunction of those working tools (which when united form a cross).... By perfecting his conduct, by struggles against his own natural propensities, the candidate is working the rough ashlar of his own nature into the perfect cube."[103]

On Level Four the Apprentice competes with himself in a caber toss, attempting to throw cast-plastic bagpipe drones into the Loughton Ram and thereby to complete the instrument's form. After many tries he succeeds and returns to Level Three, where he has been blinded by the beauty of the fashion model. Looking into the mirror of his own soul, he is transformed into an apparition of this female element. They embrace each other with the Five Points of Fellowship in a moment of exquisite oneness, and the model whispers the divine words "*Maha byn*" into his ear. But she then abruptly transmutes into the cheetah and attacks. An intense struggle ensues, which continues intermittently throughout the Order, until the Apprentice uses the stonemason's tools to slay the hybrid creature: with a blow of the plumb to her temple, she drops to one knee; hit with the level in the other, she drops to both knees; and struck in the forehead with the maul, she falls dead. Having ceremonially killed off his own reflection, the Apprentice achieves the level of Master Mason. "The death to which Masonry alludes ... is that death-in-life to a man's own lower self which Saint Paul referred to when he protested 'I die daily.'"[104] The final image of the Order shows Mullins seated on a sleigh drawn by five baby lambs. She is dressed in the costume of the First Degree Masonic initiate. Blindfolded, she wears a noose around her neck. Blood spills from her temple and forehead, where she had endured the fatal wounds of the Mason's tools.

Video stills from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

performance of *Casting* (1969) that the famous photograph of Serra hurling lead was taken, "recording the throwing of molten lead into the 'mold' formed by the angle of the floor and a wall of the Castelli Gallery warehouse space, the resultant cast being pulled away from the angle when hardened to allow for yet another wave of molten liquid." Rosalind Krauss, "Richard Serra: Sculpture," in *Richard Serra*, ed. Hal Foster with Gordon Hughes (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2000), p. 105.

102. Wilmshurst, *The Meaning of Masonry*, p. 35.
103. Ibid., p. 39.
104. Ibid., p. 43. The incantation "I die daily" is among the lyrics sung by the Agnostic Front and Murphy's Law on Level Two.

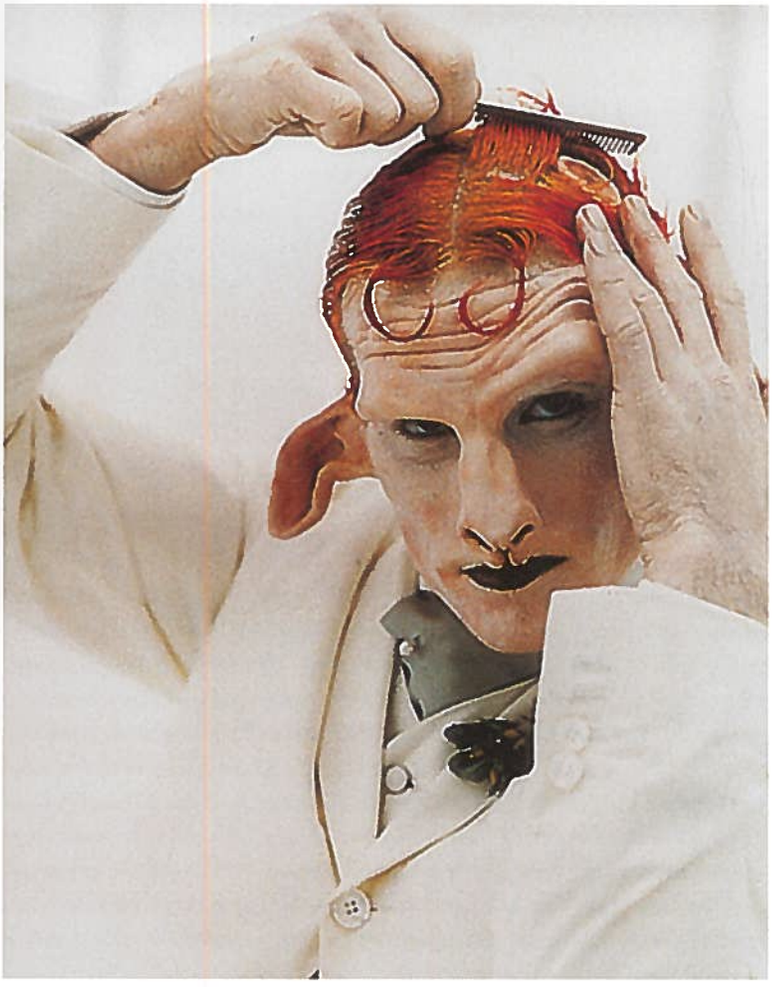
Video stills from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

During this ritualistic murder sequence—which, as the initiation into the Third Degree, reenacts the death of Hiram Abiff—the camera returns to the very top of the Chrysler Building, where the Architect is basking in the glory of his production. Unbeknownst to him, the Apprentice has escaped the dental lab and is climbing upward, just under the outer skin of the building, toward the crown. At the same moment the Apprentice eliminates the cheetah—his base self—on the ramp in the Guggenheim, he also strikes the Architect dead in the tower, in a second re-creation of Abiff's assassination. But as the Apprentice strikes the Architect's forehead with the maul, the building itself kills the Apprentice by driving the base of its spire through the top of his head. This double murder is reminiscent of the mutual suicide of the satyrs in *Drawing Restraint 7*, where both protagonists self-destructed at the moment of final accomplishment. The Chrysler Building thus remains unfinished, like Solomon's Temple in Masonic lore, which teaches that the conspiracy of the craftsmen to extract the divine secrets from Hiram Abiff delayed the completion of the great structure indefinitely. Their hubris was tantamount to the Fall of Man—they attempted to extort knowledge that was not theirs to have. The Architect and the Apprentice, each in their own way, embodied such hubristic yearnings, and for this they both were punished.

Cremaster 3 ends with a coda that links it geographically and conceptually to *Cremaster 4*, much in the same way that its early zombie scene, depicting the return of Gary Gilmore, connects it to *Cremaster 2*. Upon the satisfactory completion of the Order and the double homicide in and by the Chrysler Building, the film shifts away from its New York setting and returns to the legend of Fionn MacCumhail. Fingal has completed his crossing of the Giant's Causeway and charges toward the door of the MacCumhails' thatch-roofed hut. When he enters their home, he sees what seems to be an enormous baby—the disguised MacCumhail—gnawing on a loaf of bread and wonders, with alarm, how big the father must be if this is the child. Helping himself to some bread, he breaks his teeth on the plastic wedge hidden inside it, and as he is distracted, MacCumhail reaches up, grabs his hand, and bites off his magic finger. Terrified and weakened, Fingal flees back over the Causeway to Scotland, destroying the stone bridge in his wake. MacCumhail flings a stone at him as he rushes away; missing its mark, the stone falls into the ocean to form a new land mass—the Isle of Man, where the next installment of the *Cremaster* cycle will take place.

CREMASTER 4

If *Cremaster 3* is the dark mirror of Narcissus's reflecting pool—an interval of self-examination that leads ever inward—then *Cremaster 4* is pure propulsion. The first of the cycle's installments to be completed, it adheres more



CREMASTER 4: VALVE, 1994 (detail)

closely to the biological model of the project than do the more recently realized chapters; this penultimate episode describes the organism's onward rush toward descension despite its persistent resistance to division and the panic this tension induces. The triangulation of motion, restraint, and sensation is echoed in the narrative's tripartite structure. The logo for this episode is the Manx triskelion: three identical armored legs revolving around a central axis. Set on the Isle of Man, the film absorbs and recontextualizes the island's rich folkloric history, as well as its more modern incarnation as host to the famed Tourist Trophy (TT) motorcycle race.[105] Myth and machine combine to narrate a story of candidacy, which, like that of *Cremaster 3*, involves a trial of the will articulated by a series of passages and transformations. The elliptical path

105. Since its beginning, in 1907, the annual Isle of Man Tourist Trophy has been the premier motorcycle race in the world. An international array of riders converges each year to tackle its treacherous 37.73 mile course of converted farm roads, which historically have no speed limit. In its almost hundred-year existence, at least that many riders have perished driving its 120-mile-an-hour laps. See Michael Browning, "Ton-Up Tonic: The Murderous Isle of Man TT," in Bryan Hanrahan, ed., *Bikes and Bikies* (Melbourne: Lansdowne Press, 1974), p. 15.

CREMASTER 4: FAERIE FIELD, 1994

traveled in the narrative charts the island's shape and forms an ancient druid circle. A fairy tale in the guise of a road movie, *Cremaster 4* tells of primal initiation rites, dreams of immortality, and magical intervention.

The film comprises three main character zones. The Loughton Candidate (played by Barney) is an impeccably dressed red-haired satyr who wears a white Edwardian suit with a sprig of Manx heather in its lapel. Clearly a relative of the hybrid creatures in *Drawing Restraint 7*, he is also a descendant of a lone Manx satyr named Phynnodderree. Thought to be a fallen fairy or the victim of a curse, in local legend this hairy, muscle-bound creature once roamed the island, creating mischief wherever he went.[106] The Candidate, a dandified gentleman of a satyr, has two sets of impacted sockets in his head—four nascent horns, which will eventually grow into those of the mature, multihorned Loughton Ram. An ancient breed native to the Isle of Man, the Loughton Ram has four curving horns, two arcing upward, two down. For Barney these appendages form a diagram that proposes a condition of undifferentiation, with ascension and descension coexisting in complete equilibrium. The conceptual space between the Candidate and his ram is the "Loughton Field." It is the realm of pure potential that borders on the hubristic threshold of achieving the impossible.

The second character zone is a pair of Grand Prix–style motorcycle sidecar teams. The vehicle of the Ascending Hack is bright yellow and the two team members wear yellow body-leather and helmets. They also wear as their team insignia the three-legged Manx triskelion, or "Arms of Man,"

106. For an account of Phynnodderree, see A. W. Moore, *The Folk-Lore of the Isle of Man*, 1891 (reprint ed. Felinfach, Wales: Llanerch Publishers, 1994), pp. 55–58.

superimposed over a blue field emblem. The Ascending Hack will tour the island in a clockwise rotation starting in the lowlands, so that their trajectory traces an "Ascending Field." The opposing team, the Descending Hack, rides an aqua blue motorcycle and dresses entirely in the same color. Their insignia is the Manx triskelion superimposed over a yellow field emblem, and their route around the island will be counterclockwise beginning in the highlands, delineating a "Descending Field."

These primary characters are attended to by a third group, a trio of androgynous red-haired fairies who mirror the three narrative fields of the Candidate and the two racing teams: the Loughton Faerie, the Ascending Faerie, and the Descending Faerie. The hair of the Loughton Faerie is styled in four buns; the Ascending Faerie has two, upright buns; and the Descending Faerie has two buns toward the nape of her neck. Having no volition of their own, these supernatural creatures metamorphose in accordance with whatever field they occupy at any given time. In the film's opening sequence, for instance, in which they facilitate the Candidate's preparations for his passage into the Loughton Field, they are nude, with no visible external genitalia. Their ambiguous, ungendered bodies mirror the Candidate's emergent state. When they appear in the Ascending Field they wear yellow; when in the Descending Field, blue.

Cremaster 4 begins and ends in a small, white, vinyl-padded building on Queen's Pier, a Victorian construction that extends a quarter mile into the mist-laden Irish Sea. As the film starts, the Loughton Candidate is seen parting his hair in a vanity mirror that runs along one interior wall of the structure. In a moment of anticipation he fingers the concave sockets in his head. The attendant fairies fit hooflike white-plastic taps onto his leather brogues and fill his pockets with large pearls, the weight of which will assist him in his efforts to dance his way through the floor. While the Candidate is being prepared (or disciplined) for his journey, the motorcycle race begins. Each team speeds off from the starting line in opposite directions. Their antipodal circumnavigation of the island—like the flow of veins and arteries in the circulatory system of the body—puts them on a potential collision course. This hazard-to-come suffuses the atmosphere of the film like the thick Manx fog that envelops the island.[107]

The camera cuts back and forth between the speeding motorbikes and the Candidate, who is tap-dancing on the white plastic floor, marking out a rhythm to the melody in his head. The friction of his pulsing beat begins to wear away the membrane of the floor, an erosion that continues until it makes a hole large enough to swallow a man. As the bikes vie for the TT title, careening around the island's unyielding landscape of bumpy, unsealed roads, stone walls, mountainous terrain, and furrowed bridges, the camera

PITCH: The Field of the Ascending HACK, 1994

Video still from *CREMASTER 4*, 1994

Production photograph from *CREMASTER 4*, 1994

107. The Tourist Trophy's "Mountain circuit runs from the start at Glencrutchery Road in a westerly direction through Braddan, Union Mills, Glen Vine and Crosby until it reaches Ballacraine. At Ballacraine the riders turn right and head north through Glen Helen, Kirk Michael, Ballaugh and Sulby to Ramsey, some 23.5 miles from the start. Now the riders swing south and head up the daunting Mountain climb rising from sea level in Ramsey to some 1,400 ft. at the highest point at Brandywell. On the way they pass through Ramsey Hairpin, The Waterworks, Gooseneck, Guthries Memorial, The East Mountain Gate, Black Hut, The Verandah and the Bungalow. After Brandywell it is nearly all downhill to the finish, some six miles away, through Windy Corner and the 33rd Milestone on through Keppel Gate and the fast run down to Creg-ny-Baa. Then it's on down to Brandish and on up through Hillberry to Signpost Corner. Now just over a mile from the finish the riders swoop through Bedstead corner and the Nook and past the Governors residence on their left to Governors Bridge, from there it's just a short run up Glencrutchery Road to the finish line." See http://www.ttwebsite.com/history/.

CREMASTER 4: Gob ny Creggan Glassey, 1994 (details)

pulls in for close-up shots of the riders' torsos. Gelatinous gonadal forms—undifferentiated internal sex organs—emerge from slots in their uniforms in a migratory quest for directionality. In the case of the Ascending Hack, the organs move upward toward a second set of slots in the yellow leather. With the Descending Hack, they ooze downward, heading across a blue-leathered thigh toward the outer extremity of the sidecar.

Back at the pier the Loughton Candidate achieves his objective and plunges through the floor into the sea, in a Houdini-esque escape from the isolation chamber of his padded cell. Sinking to the bottom, he traverses the ocean floor toward the island. At the moment of his fall—a transition from the utopian realm of pregenital oneness to that of bifurcation—the Ascending Hack collides with a stone embankment and the Descending Hack pulls off the course for a pit stop, where the three fairies, now dressed in skintight blue jump suits, service their motorcycle. Using a tartan-wrapped hydraulic jack and white vinyl wedges, they prop up the back of the bike and remove its wheel, replacing it with a flesh-toned tire sporting a healthy set of descended testicles. Their action allows the roving organs to move farther down the outer side of the sidecar, but will render the bike useless until they reinstall a working wheel.

The Loughton Candidate reaches land and begins to burrow his way up into the body of the island. He enters a curving viscous channel that he must navigate in order to reach his desired destination: the TT finish line, where the two Hacks will meet in a fusion of yellow and blue. Above, on the beach perpendicular to the pier, a line of raised sand indicates his path inland. As he progresses into the depths of the island, his path becomes increasingly arduous: the channel gives way to a narrow three-sided tunnel filled with bulbous protrusions and petroleum jelly. The Candidate perseveres, contorting his body to pass through the constricted straits and swimming through the oppressive Vaseline goo. Part intestine, part birth canal, this torturous conduit leads him to a bluff high on the island, where the fairies are having a picnic. Dressed in bright yellow dresses over full hoop skirts, the three sprites frolic on a yellow mat that recalls the field from Barney's earlier work *REPRESSIA* (1991). "A play within the play,"[108] this picnic is the site of a "triple option," a football maneuver in which the Ascending Faerie, who has intercepted the hydraulic jack disguised as a thermos, has the choice of keeping, pitching, or passing it. She elects to pitch the thermos to the Descending Faerie, who declines the throw, wanting nothing to do with the process of ascension. The Loughton Faerie tries unsuccessfully to intervene. Their gestures mirror the conflict enacted by the principal characters, but with none of the tension; for them the process is merely a game.

Still mired in his underground tunnel, the Loughton Candidate finally reaches the roadway site where the two competing Hacks will intersect. He

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108. This is Barney's description of the picnic scene. See Sans, "Matthew Barney: Modern Heroes," p. 29.

hears their approaching engines through the earth and asphalt above him. The Loughton Ram, with wool dyed red and all four horns decked in ribbons of yellow and blue Manx tartan, stands at this junction—a symbol for the total integration of opposites, the urge for unity that fuels this triple race. But before the three entities—Candidate, Ascending Hack, and Descending Hack—converge, the screen goes white and silent. This blankness bespeaks the annulment of desire, the impossibility of fusion. The Loughton Candidate's dream of transcending his biology to dwell in the space of pure symmetry embodied by the Loughton Ram is shattered. His campaign to turn the blue or yellow of his destiny into green is defeated, and revealed, perhaps, to have been little more than a delusion. He has glimpsed the seductive realm of the anal-sadistic universe, where all difference is abolished, where man and ram and island and motor form one continuous flow of desire. For the hubris of his aspirations he must be disciplined.

In the final sequence the narrative returns to Queen's Pier, where the Ascending and Descending Hacks—still intact and definitively separate—are parked on discrete ramps sloping down from the building's exterior. A white curtain parts to reveal disembodied testicles submerged in Vaseline and bedecked with blue and yellow ribbons. Pincers bearing the Arms of Man emblem pull at yellow and blue cords that pierce the scrotal sac. Indications are thus given that the hormonal drive toward differentiation is well underway (despite the Loughton Candidate's efforts) and that the direction is unquestionably male. In the closing image the camera peers through an open crotch at the top of the frame toward the end of the pier. A tightly retracted scrotum is pierced with white plastic clasps connected to vinyl cords, which trail off to the awaiting Ascending and Descending Hacks, who will drive toward the island to pick up the slack. Full descension is guaranteed. This corrective action is also an attempt to realize symmetry in a situation that inherently lacks it. The male body is by nature structurally uneven; one testicle usually hangs lower than the other in the scrotal sac. Barney has proposed that this condition may be the source of the *contrapposto* pose of the body in classical and classically inspired art; the hip of the male figure is dropped in order to compensate for this anatomical imbalance.[109] In the final scene of the film, the number of plastic clips attached to the scrotum is an odd number: four on the left, three on the right. The Ascending Hack on the right will pull up as it drives away, and the Descending Hack on the left will pull down in an effort to bring the body into alignment, shifting the pelvis into a level position. In *Cremaster 4* the biological turns sculptural, investing a classical morphological trope with a new metaphoric meaning: true creative form may only emerge from the understanding that total resolution (or total symmetry) is never really possible regardless of the amount of discipline applied.

CREMASTER 4: t↔t, 1994 (detail)

Production still from *CREMASTER 4*, 1994

109. See Lingwood, "Keeping Track of Matthew Barney," p. 53.

CREMASTER 4: Field of the Ascending Faerie, 1994

CREMASTER 5

As the final link in the narrative chain *Cremaster 5* describes the farthest point from the state of ascension embodied by Goodyear in the pregenital cocoon of her dirigibles. Since that blissful first moment the process of differentiation has been rejected, contemplated, and rehearsed during the ensuing three *Cremaster* installments. When total descension is finally attained in this concluding segment, it is envisioned as a tragic love story, a lamentation on separation and loss set in the romantic dreamscape of late-nineteenth-century Budapest. *Cremaster 5* is cast in the shape of a lyric opera (composed by Jonathan Bepler). Biological metaphors—cellular division, gonadal migration, testicular descension—shift form to inhabit emotional states. Loneliness, longing, spitefulness, and despair are the musical leitmotivs that infuse the orchestral score. The opera's primary characters—the Queen of Chain (played with elegiac beauty by Ursula Andress) and her Diva, Magician, and Giant (all played by Barney)—enact collectively, as a musical ensemble, the final release promised by the project as a whole.

While the differentiation conceived of in the *Cremaster* cycle results in the formation of a man, the tenor of its final chapter is decidedly female. The opera issues from the Queen's memories and the open wound that is her heart. Barney's characters are defined in relation to the mirror of her imagination. There is even the possibility that they only exist as shadows of her desire, figments of a forlorn mind. Like the drama that unfolds when the Loughton Candidate peers at his reflection in the vanity mirror in *Cremaster 4*, the events depicted in the opera may be a dream sequence. This would mean that the Diva, the Musician, and the Giant are projections of the Queen's unconscious desires. Descension—the apotheosis of the *Cremaster* project—would then be merely a mirage, a fantasy forged in the recesses of the Queen's subconscious.[110]

The opera's settings—the neo-Renaissance Hungarian State Opera House, the exoticized, Secession-style Gellért Baths, and the heroic Lánchíd (Chain) Bridge—are similarly extensions of the Queen's desire. They reverberate outward from her body, as if spun from arias of love and loss. Architectural and anatomical structures combine to create emotional spaces that breathe, weep, and expire in unison with their human counterparts.[111] Even Budapest assumes corporeal dimensions. Established in 1873 through the union of three towns, Óbuda, Buda, and Pest, this hybrid city was one year later the birthplace of Ehrich Weiss/Harry Houdini. For Barney, then, it is a place of origin, a procreative vessel, a site of gestation where the resident spirit of the *Cremaster* cycle was born. Patron saint, role model, and inspiration, Houdini presides over the entire project, which in a sense begins and ends with him. The looping chronology of the cycle, synonymous with the temporal arc of *Cremaster 2*, suggests as much.

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110. According to Todorov, the "not-knowing" whether a narrative is a dream or a fairy tale is the defining feature of the literary fantastic: "The fantastic, we have seen, lasts only as long as a certain hesitation: a hesitation common to reader and character, who must decide whether or not what they perceive derives from a 'reality' as it exists in the common opinion." Todorov, *The Fantastic*, p. 41.

111. In an interview with Hans-Ulrich Obrist, Barney remarks, "Opera is a model I feel closer to than film. It is related to architecture in a way that the opera house is anatomical. It is built in such a way that amplification is not necessary. It is not unlike being inside a chest, it is sympathetic to the body in the way that the curves work in terms of the acoustics. One can say in a sort of simplified way that the works I make are a bit like constructing a narrative within a body that would take place in an opera house." Published in the brochure accompanying Barney's commission for the Vienna State Opera House curtain, museum in progress, Vienna, 2000.

Video still from *CREMASTER 5*, 1997

Structured in five acts—like Greek tragedy, which was most typically composed around five conflicts—*Cremaster 5* opens with an overture that introduces the opera's characters and lays out the map of Budapest that the narrative will traverse.[112] The Magician crosses the Lánchíd Bridge on horseback. Cloaked in black, he merges with the night air. The Queen ascends the grand staircase of the opera house with her two ushers, who lift the train of her billowing black skirt. She settles onto her flesh-colored pillow of a throne in the royal booth, and the ushers arrange a fleet of seven white Jacobin pigeons around her. Pearls float on the surface of the tepid pools in the Gellért Baths, partially concealing the Füdőr sprites, who inhabit their underwater realms. The curtain rises to an empty theater, the conductor readies his orchestra, and the opera begins.

As the Queen begins to sing (in Hungarian), her Diva appears on the stage before her, conjured perhaps by the melancholy cadence of her song. He performs a dance of thresholds, delineating the proscenium arch of the stage by laying ribbons across its floor and then scaling its walls and ceiling. He draws its aperture with his body. Her lyrics call out to him:

> Prepare the proscenium arch
> She defines his step
> Toward the painted, icy field
> Inhaling...
> Now, turn to me
> Look through the proscenium arch
> She defines his stance
> On the line before me
> Exhaling...
> Now, turn to me

112. The link between Greek tragedy, grand opera, and the *Cremaster* cycle as a whole can be inferred from the following quotation: "Most Greek tragedies were structured around five conflicts, generally involving two characters in each of five dialogue confrontations. The concept of conflict forms the basis of all successful opera, as it does for all successful theater. The five-part form also would be used again and again in opera, especially in the customary five acts of French nineteenth-century opera, or in the five-part form of Strauss's *Elektra*, a modern version of the ancient Greek play." Ancient roots can thus be established for the aesthetic of *Cremaster 5*: "Other central features of Greek musical tragedies were their elegiac tone and elegance and restraint of presentation." See John Louis DiGaetani, *An Invitation to the Opera* (New York: Anchor Books, 1986), p. 15.

Video still from *CREMASTER 5*, 1997

The choreography of the Diva's climb demarcates the arch as a line of pressure between the space of the stage and that of the audience. Barney's fascination with the tension held in this architectural zone is expressed in a collage he made for the film's storyboard, which juxtaposes an image of the Caspar David Friedrich painting *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (*The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*, ca. 1818) with a photograph of the hardcore vocalist Henry Rollins. In the Friedrich image a man stands with his back to the viewer contemplating a vast landscape obscured by fog. Conversely, the photograph depicts Rollins facing his audience, screaming into the microphone, its cables wrapped tightly around his punching hand. Both figures maintain an authority over the artificial realms they address: painted scene and theatrical audience respectively. One faces away, lost in the reverie of dramatic illusion; the other opens outward to acknowledge the proscenium arch and the spectators beyond. The space between them is a liminal one, where theatrical artifice and the physicality of live performance coexist in a state of perpetual conflict. The Diva character inhabits this middle zone, turning to the side rather than inward or outward. He chooses to remain in the field of indeterminacy located at the precipice of the opera stage. In the vocabulary of *Cremaster 4* he spurns the fields of blue (backstage) and yellow (audience) for that of green (arch), preferring pure potential to categorical definition.

> In the pale blue field
> Solitude—
> The curve of the earth comforts him
> (His pride is false!)
> A willful contrapposto
> The hip rolls upward

Inhaling . . . Hubris
Now, turn to me

In the cool yellow field
Pressure—
The dense arena confronts him
(His pride is false!)
Violently hunching forward
Bound to gravity
The diaphragm drops
Projecting . . . Hubris
Now, turn to me

In the gilded mint green field
His image is reflected
In a milky highlight
Only red obscures her green

Proscenium . . .
Turning through her axis
For a moment—he is free

Video still from *CREMASTER 5*, 1997

During the Diva's performance the Queen's mind wanders to memories of her beloved Magician. She recalls their final embrace during a wintry Budapest dusk; fitting a stirrup onto his boot before he embarks on a journey to perform a death-defying feat, she bids him farewell.[113] Her mourning continues as she reenvisions him standing on the Lánchíd Bridge, preparing for a leap into the dark, frigid waters of the Danube below. Stripped naked, he positions white plastic shackles over his wrists and ankles, then fits molded gloves on his hands and places weighted balls between his toes. Standing on the very edge of a plinth jutting out from the bridge, the Magician embodies the hermeticism of Houdini's practice. He represents every manacled bridge jump, fantastic escape, and metamorphosis the artist performed, as well as every hour of training it took to achieve them.[114] The Magician is seeking transcendence; he is trying to elude the inevitability of definition and to find instead a place of possibility—the kind of possibility manifest in the zeppelins that hover over the goalposts in *Cremaster 1* or manifest in the four curving horns of the Loughton Ram in *Cremaster 4*. His is the hypertrophic impulse; through restraint he will be free. But the Queen misunderstands his actions and thinks he is trying to take his own life. She fears abandonment and fights against his release.

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113. This act of preparing the "hero" before an epic journey was first seen in *Cremaster 4*, when the fairies attached cleatlike taps to the Loughton Candidate's shoes.

114. Houdini's manacled bridge jumps, a regular and sensational part of his act, were clearly Barney's source for the Magician's leap. A jump on May 6, 1907, off the Weighlock Bridge in Rochester, New York, was documented on film: "Houdini removes his coat and vest, strips his suspenders and pleated dress shirt, peels off his trousers and stockings. Clad only in long white undershorts, he poses a moment for the movie camera. After a policeman locks him into two pairs of cuffs, he climbs to the topmost truss of the bridge, barechested, holds up his shackled wrists to the crowd, shouts to them ('Goodbye'), and jumps straight down toward the canal. As the plummeting feetfirst white blur splashes into the inky water, one pair of cuffs flies off. In fifteen seconds, Houdini bobs up, the other pair dangling from one wrist; he sinks again, then surfaces with both cuffs unlocked." Silverman, *Houdini*, pp. 114–15.

The 24th of March[115]—in the final freeze of that year
This was our first and painfully, our very last
Over the Danube
I left you there on a bridge of chain

Worthless chain!

I carried away the warmth
Of your impression on my shoulder
Such a hasty departure
Your inevitable final step
In replay at half-speed
For the rest of my life

This divine resistance?!

Without you now
I must pass over the chain each night, alone
My magician, my love
Was this a final act of disappearance?
Could it be, then
That you are still on your way down?

Give me a sign, my dear
In a moment of strength
I will join you in your path

CREMASTER 5: Elválas, 1997 (detail)

Video still from *CREMASTER 5*, 1997

The Queen's focus shifts back to the opera house and the Diva, giving her momentary respite from the sorrow of her memories. The ushers direct her attention to orifices in her throne through which she can see down into the Gellért Baths below her. The camera next moves upward under her skirts to a view between her legs, then returns to the watery environs of the spa, suggesting metonymically that the scene about to unfold takes place within her body. The form of her fleshy throne reiterates this notion. The sculpted stool upon which she sits conforms exactly to the shape of her buttocks; the symmetry of this seat mirrors the two adjacent bathing pools lying beneath her. One bath is forty-five degrees Celsius; the other, forty-seven. The narrow path lying between the pools is a projection of the Queen's perineum; it is in this liminal anatomical space that her Giant resides.

During this interlude the Queen's retinue of birds plummets through the passages in her throne, trailing long satin blue-and-yellow ribbons into

115. March 24, 1874, was Houdini's birthday.

CREMASTER 5: A Dance for the Queen's Menagerie, 1997 (detail)

the humid bath. The water sprites stir under their ceiling of pearls. Preadolescent hermaphrodites with breast buds and tiny Art Nouveau penises luxuriate in their aqueous world, fluttering around an underwater mosaic staircase and playfully tickling and embracing one another. These blissful creatures seem to have been plucked from Hungarian folklore; they could be the daughters of the King of the Green Water Fairies, who lived under a lake and traveled in a pearl boat.[116] Carrying the Jacobin pigeons, the Queen's Giant enters the bath. The most baroque of Barney's characters, he is a Neptune figure. His hair is made of clear glass bubbles, his mustache is encased in a crystal swirl so that it looks like a stream of water, his ears are drooping calla lilies, and his legs taper into thigh-high lily blossoms (vestiges of which are visible on the legs of the Magician). Like the

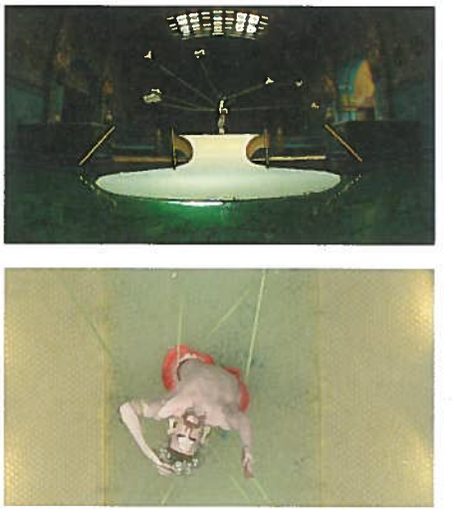
116. The legend of the daughters of the King of the Green Water Fairies may not be Barney's direct source, but the artist often does make use of the indigenous literature and folklore of the culture in which he is working, as, for example, he did on the Isle of Man. See Nandor Pogany, "The Lake of St. Anna," in *The Hungarian Fairy Book* (London: T. Fisher, 1913), pp. 162–76.

Loughton Candidate before him, the Giant lacks external genitalia, save for an abstracted scrotum.

The Queen watches silently from above as the Giant enters the watery path between the two pools, wading through the pearls to hip level. The sprites cluster around him with a garland of seven blue-and-yellow ribbons they have woven together out of those attached to the birds. They reach up through the water and affix the garland to the Giant's scrotum. This gesture resonates with the tense final image of *Cremaster 4*: the seven satin ribbons echo the seven braided cords used to discipline the organs of the Loughton Candidate. Here, however, in the warm, soothing waters of the thermal baths, and with the playful encouragement of the sprites, the cremaster muscle releases and the testicles descend.[117] This climactic moment—the emergence of a fully differentiated state—is rendered visible when the Jacobin pigeons soar upward, wings flapping and ribbons trailing. They pull at the very core of being, achieving ascent within the inescapable course of descent. The blue-and-yellow ribbons (of the Ascending and Descending Fields) have blended to become green ribbons, the color of possibility. The Giant stretches his arms upward to his Queen, offering this option, but she is too distraught to understand freedom in the abstract.

The Queen's thoughts return to the Magician, whom we see leaning at the edge of the bridge, deep in concentration, preparing for his great escape. She relives his leap into the river and swoons from the horror of her recollection. The ushers cushion her fall. At this point the narrative mirrors the path of descension just revealed: having completed his climb, the Diva tumbles to the stage in a tragic accident that ends his existence. A pink substance oozes from the space previously occupied by his head. Meanwhile the Magician plunges to the bottom of the river, landing, manacled, on a sumptuous flowerbed. Calla lilies sway with the tide around him, and two water sprites caress his fallen body and insert a black pearl into his mouth. This gesture invokes the funeral practice in which a pearl is placed in the mouth of a noble to preserve the body and assure long life in the next world. The Queen performs her mournful aria, preparing to join her lover in death:

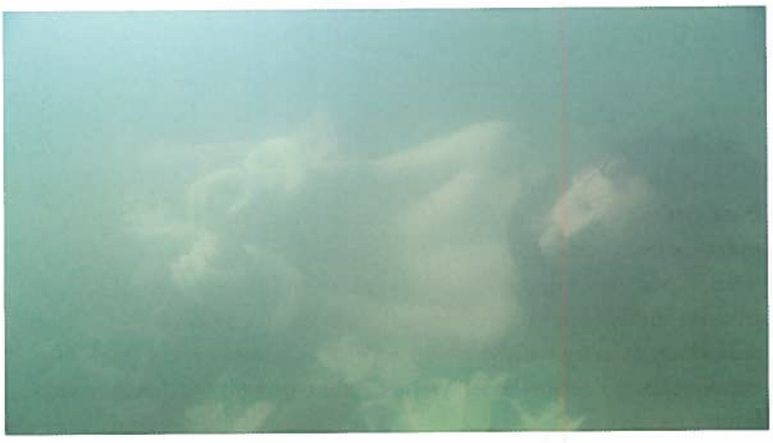
> Warmth...
> Separation...
> Descension...
> Definition...
> Release...
>
> Black has finally overcome the threat of red



Video stills from *CREMASTER 5*, 1997

117. Because the baths on either side of the Giant are different temperatures, his testicles descend unevenly, preserving the innately *contrapposto* posture of the male figure and denying pure symmetry.

Video still from *CREMASTER 5*, 1997



My love, I now understand the chain
And within the lock, the lilies are turning
away from the light
We fall, my love, together
Come to me . . . (until now withholding)
Release . . . (until now withholding)
Release. . . .

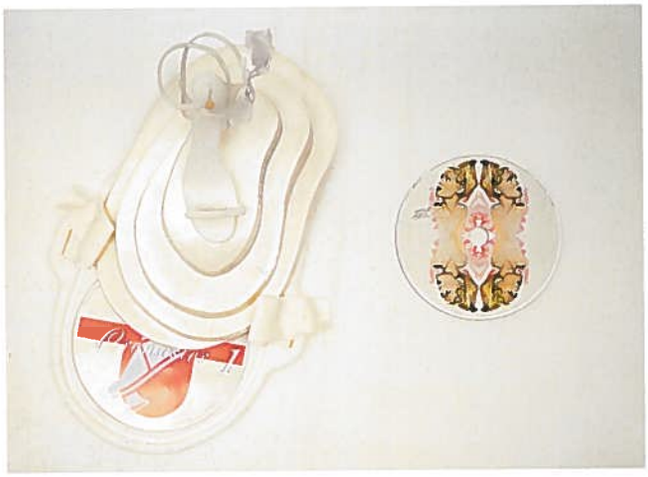
As the Queen falls into the deep slumber of her sorrow, a thin stream of liquid emanates from her mouth, trickling onto her ruffle and throne, then falling into the pools below. On its descent the stream divides into two droplets that strike the water simultaneously. Two perfect circles resonate outward, filling the surface of the bath with their quiet waves.

These droplets signify two possible endings to *Cremaster 5*, and to the cycle as a whole, deferring any single definitive reading of the project. The first scenario, suggested by the rings radiating outward on the water, adheres to the looping chronology of the series, as exemplified in Gilmore's retreat to the era of Houdini. If *Cremaster 2* can be seen as a microcosm of the entire project, then the cycle itself travels backward in time in order to begin anew. It moves through or rehearses the paternal space of *Cremaster 5* in order to revisit the pregenital space of *Cremaster 1*, recycling itself in a circle of eternal return. The ascent of the birds at the final, long-awaited moment of descension in *Cremaster 5* intimates that the descent may be false or that differentiation is a dialectical process, one state always containing and completing its opposite. The enigmatic shot upward under the Queen's gown toward her genitals suggests that the male state of descension cannot be thought of separately from its female counterpart. Beyond the strictly

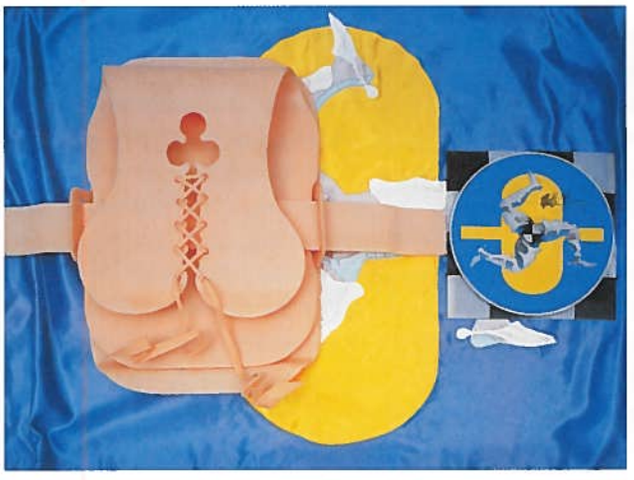
biological, this scenario alludes to the notion that conflict itself is critical to the creation of form (psychological, biographical, geographical); it is not some illusory end product.

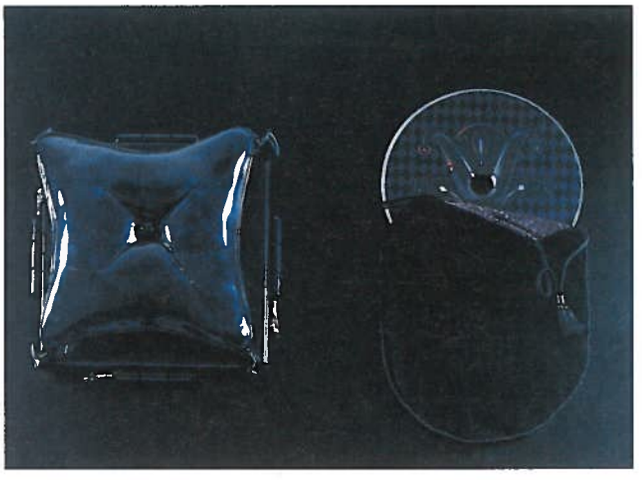
The second scenario imagines the death or self-destruction of the system through the erroneous assumption that it has failed to achieve some predetermined outcome. Thinking her Magician has died, the Queen takes her own life, which also erases the existence of her Diva. Confusing escape with death, transcendence with rejection, she betrays the true goal of the system, which is to find a way to look beyond itself, to reach the other side of consciousness, form, or definition. Whether it is ever truly possible to fulfill this goal without unleashing the destructive forces of hubris remains an unanswered question. And this is the essential tragedy of the cycle: eternal recurrence. Like the "kid" perennially chasing the inner and ever-elusive threshold of his being, *Cremaster* is in a tailspin.[118]

118. Barney has described the cycle as a tragedy, saying, "In a certain way they [the five chapters] all end up being tragic. In the way that the narratives are never really allowed to resolve themselves in any way, there's something about that which makes them resistant to that kind of heroism. In the way that the satyr chases its own tale [*sic*], I think all these narratives in the end chase their tails, they're sort of in a tailspin. Sometimes it becomes a little more complex and there's a moment in a piece which essentially turns it back onto itself. I don't think it's ever really allowed to describe itself purely as a resolved story." Quoted in Sans, "Matthew Barney: Modern Heroes," p. 30.



CREMASTER 1, 1995–96
CREMASTER 2, 1999
CREMASTER 3, 2002
CREMASTER 4, 1994–95
CREMASTER 5, 1997
Vitrines, each containing special edition laser disk
or digital video disk of its respective film, two views





PART III | From Cinema to Sculpture

NARRATIVE AND DESIRE

The *Cremaster* cycle is aesthetically polymorphous. Each of the five films has its own distinct look, derived from both the location in which it was made and the period it invokes. Chronologically, the films range from the 1870s, and the birth of Harry Houdini, to the 1970s, and the death of Gary Gilmore, with all sorts of anachronistic moments along the way. Barney is drawn to certain periods because of their design aesthetics, which he utilizes as visual conduits for his narratives. Turn-of-the-century corsetry, Depression-era precision dancing, Art Deco architecture, Victorian physical culture, and Baroque opera are only some of the media with which he sculpts his cinematic vision. Each episode has its own predominant palette and its own logo, which incorporates Barney's field emblem. The logo for *Cremaster 1* is the winged Goodyear boot with a small silver funnel added to the toe; for *Cremaster 2*, a heraldic arrangement of the beehive, the American and Canadian flags, and the dates 1977 (the year of Gilmore's execution) and 1893 (the year of the Columbian Exposition); for *Cremaster 3*, a Masonic coat of arms with a double-headed eagle, the Chrysler Building, and a Celtic harp; for *Cremaster 4*, the Arms of Man punctured by the tunnel that runs under the island; and for *Cremaster 5*, a stylized fleur-de-lis. And while each film can exist on its own as a discrete work of art, an independent entity with its own internal code of conduct, the five come together like the sides of a pentagon to form a single self-enclosed system. Beyond the iconographic links, of which there are many, the films connect through something far more ephemeral: time, a glacial pace that crystallizes action and clarifies tone. This is not to say that all of the *Cremaster* films are slow, but they share an abstract temporality, an intense, deliberate pacing that allows elements usually considered secondary or even tertiary—such as landscape, color, costume, and set—to come to the fore. Characters may be flattened out into zones, but other elements take on emotional depth and psychological complexity. Barney has said that his films move "at the speed of art—which is slow." He has also defined his entire practice as sculptural,[119] discussing the films themselves as if they were three-dimensional entities. He once said of *Cremaster 2*, "It moves slowly and requires that one move around it to understand it, and to visit it repeatedly."[120]

Though emphatically of the 1990s and beyond, Barney's films share (albeit superficially) a strategy mined by the Appropriation artists of the 1980s, such as Jeff Koons, Richard Prince, and Cindy Sherman; the films borrow existing genres to exploit as their own. Barney, however, is not attempting to critique the cinematic or theatrical frames he appropriates in some kind of deconstructive act aimed at popular culture. Rather, he inhabits various genres because they supply vocabularies and aesthetics that will advance his

119. See Linda Yablonsky, "A Portrait of the Artist as a Gun Man," *Time Out New York*, no. 212 (October 14–21, 1999), p. 200. Barney comments on the tempo of his films in this interview. In conversations with the author he has often discussed his œuvre in terms of sculpture.
120. Ibid.

narrative. He thinks of these genres as "host bodies" that the *Cremaster* system can "latch onto" like an opportunistic virus.[121] In order to succeed, each film must perform with the same authority as the genre it occupies; it must act and think like the form that harbors and nourishes it.

Barney's most explicit appropriation occurs in *Cremaster 1*, which seamlessly fuses the symmetrical seduction of precision dancing (as filtered through the sweet wholesomeness of a cheerleading squad) with the exactitude of military formation. Conflating the kinetic extravaganzas of the Hollywood dance director Busby Berkeley with the athletic uniformity of Leni Riefenstahl's Aryan propaganda films, this is a hybrid musical comedy about an embryonic skirmish. Goodyear, the blonde starlet, fights to maintain control over her biological destiny by choreographing the movements of her dance troupe to form diagrams of an undifferentiated system. Emulating Berkeley's famed crane shots, Barney films the chorus girls from above as they glide in and out of position, never once breaking rank or missing a beat. His camera indulges us by zooming in on each beatific face, if just for an instant, then peering through the girls' perfectly synchronized legs with low tracking shots. Their costumes—tiered hoop skirts—are vintage Berkeley, lifted straight out of the "Shadow Waltz" number from *Gold Diggers of 1933* (1933). Here, though, the girls wear the orange and blue of Bronco Stadium. In the Berkeley routine the chorus arranges itself in the shape of a violin, which it then "plays" with a human-formed bow. Barney's use of this kind of representational patterning—he sees gonads where Berkeley sees musical instruments—is more than a formal device; like Berkeley's, his choreographic gestures illustrate the ever-shifting relationship between the individual and the collective.[122] At points in the narrative Goodyear appears on the playing field surrounded by her chorus in an ecstatic union of self and other. She rides a pearl-covered float through their adoring arms, and they create a field emblem miraculously filled with a kaleidoscopic quadrangle made from four views of her smiling face.

Barney explores the tenuous connection between the individual and the crowd throughout the *Cremaster* cycle. While hermetic practices require isolation, there is always the pull of the masses, in which one can lose any sense of individuality. Self-loss is ritualized in the mosh pit, where music fans engage in an energized communal writhing that is as hostile as it is sensual. Included in the Guggenheim sequence of *Cremaster 3* as one of the obstacles through which the Apprentice must pass, the mosh pit is simultaneously enticing and horrifying. The same combination of attraction and repulsion appears in all of Barney's various versions of precision dancing: the routines by the Bronco Stadium girls, the Order of the Rainbow dancers in *Cremaster 3*, the mounted state troopers in the prison rodeo of *Cremaster 2*.

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121. Barney, quoted in Romney, "Matthew Barney," pp. 87, 93.

122. "In Berkeley's numbers, the experience of losing oneself in the group, in the big ensemble, is presented as primarily ecstatic. It is a moment of transcendence and sublimation, analogous to orgasm, but erupting beyond the confines of the ego to fuse self and society, sexuality and politics, emotion and ideology." Martin Rubin, "The Crowd, the Collective, and the Chorus: Busby Berkeley and the New Deal," in *Movies and Mass Culture* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996), p. 78.

The Berkeley flavor of *Cremaster 1* slides into the chilling sensibility of Riefenstahl. The perfection of precision dancing depends on the sublimation of individual artistic expression, requiring "an intricate technology of form—equal spacing, even extensions, rhythmic synchronizations, and the erasure of interpretive flair."[123]

The friction between total self-absorption, on the one hand, and annihilation of the self through its immersion in the crowd, on the other, is symptomatic of the larger biological/ontological struggle that drives the *Cremaster* cycle. By employing diverse genres, Barney accesses different vocabularies with which to articulate this central conflict. In *Cremaster 2*, for instance, Gilmore's attempt to escape his fate as a drone is cast in the form of a gothic Western. *Cremaster 3*, which envisions the development of character through the fortification of will, is rendered as a mutant zombie/gangster film. The rite of passage described in *Cremaster 4* is cast as a classic road movie tinged with the suave air of a Fred Astaire dance number. And *Cremaster 5*, which recounts the final (and false) release from the cycle, inhabits the structure of an operatic love story. Barney's approach to the genres he borrows from is entirely fetishistic. With his core of collaborators—costume designers, makeup and special effects experts, fabricators, etc.—he absorbs and reenvisions every salient detail so that it can take its place and fulfill its function within the *Cremaster* universe. The translation of appropriated vocabulary into the language of the *Cremaster* cycle is further deepened by Bepler's scores for the five episodes, which rearticulate music from the period, genre, and styles invoked.[124] Like Barney's visual imagery, Bepler's compositions are provocative mixes of the archaic and the contemporary.

The core conflict of the *Cremaster* project—which has been discussed in biological, biographical, and psychosexual terms—can also be read through a literary model. Narrative, after all, is the primary element connecting the various cinematic and dramatic genres that Barney adapts. While narrative structure may usually be a given in the literary arts—including here the theatrical realms of drama and film—it certainly does not occupy that role for contemporary sculpture. Each chapter of the *Cremaster* project includes not only a film but also related objects, installations, photographs, drawings, and an artist's book. Collectively these tell a story, *one* story, which changes its form but not its substance from episode to episode. This narrative is, in essence, a chronicle of the personal quest to reach the next level, to transcend the status quo, to overcome the strictures of the self.

Typologically, the quest-narrative can be broken down into a sequence of two functions, which is endlessly repeatable in an unbroken chain of events. For the semiotician Jurij Lotman these functions—typified as an "entry into

123. John Alliotts, "Precision Dancing," *Dancemagazine* 56, no. 12 (December 1982), p. 42.

124. The musical component of the *Cremaster* cycle is beyond the scope of this essay, but it demands detailed analysis, for it contributes enormously to the project's conceptual rigor. For reasons of brevity, this text will simply acknowledge Jonathan Bepler's prodigious talent as a composer.

a closed space, and emergence from it"—can take any number of forms that are entirely interchangeable. "Inasmuch as closed space can be interpreted as 'a cave,' 'the grave,' 'a house,' 'a woman' (and, correspondingly, be allotted the features of darkness, warmth, dampness)," he explains, "entry into it is interpreted on various levels as 'death,' 'conception,' 'return home,' and so on; moreover all these acts are thought of as mutually identical."[125] In this Structuralist analysis the most fundamental kernel of these narratives is *passage*, the movement from point A to point B, in both temporal and spatial terms. Film theorist Teresa de Lauretis has argued that the "hero" who undertakes this mythical passage is archetypally male, and that the obstacle, whatever its form, is female. If the initial impetus behind the textual generation of myth was to establish distinctions, to convert the seeming randomness of the universe into meaningful order, then, according to de Lauretis, the "primary distinction on which all others depend is not, say, life and death, but rather sexual difference."[126] "In other words," she continues,

> the picture of the world produced in mythical thought since the very beginning of culture would rest, first and foremost, on what we call biology. Opposite pairs such as inside/outside, the raw/the cooked, appear to be merely derivatives of the fundamental opposition between boundary and passage; and if passage may be in either direction, from inside to outside or vice versa, from life to death or vice versa, nonetheless all these terms are predicated on the single figure of the hero who crosses the boundary and penetrates the other space. In doing so the hero, the mythical subject, is constructed as human being and as male; he is the active principle of culture, the establisher of distinction, the creator of differences. Female is what is not susceptible to transformation, to life or death; she (it) is an element of plot-space, a topos, a resistance, matrix, and matter.[127]

The ur-narrative of Western culture—the paradigmatic plot that defines all others—is the story of Oedipus Rex, who unwittingly murdered his father and married his mother. Adopted by Freud to explicate the stages of early psychosexual development, the institution of the incest taboo, and the subjection of the individual to paternal law, the story depends entirely on the structural division between the sexes.[128] The Oedipal story—with its eponymous "complex" and attendant symptoms (castration anxiety, penis envy, incestual desire, fantasies of aggression)—is thus an origin myth.[129] It articulates the formation of self within a patriarchal structure premised on binary thought, which itself depends on an unbridgeable gap between desire and lack. To

125. Jurij Lotman, quoted in Teresa de Lauretis, "Desire in Narrative," *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 118. She is citing Lotman's essay "The Origin of Plot in the Light of Typology," trans. Julian Graffy, *Poetics Today* 1, nos. 1–2 (autumn 1979), p. 168. My discussion of narrative in relation to Barney's *Cremaster* cycle is indebted to de Lauretis's study of the genderizing implications of Western narrative.

126. Ibid., p. 119.

127. Ibid.

128. In a letter dated October 15, 1897, Freud announced his discovery of the Oedipus complex: "One single thought of general value has been revealed to me. I have found, in my own case too, falling in love with the mother and jealousy of the father, and I now regard it as a universal event of early childhood. . . . If that is so, we can understand the riveting power of *Oedipus Rex*, in spite of all the objections raised by reason against its presupposition of destiny. . . . the Greek legend seizes on a compulsion which everyone recognizes because he feels its existence within himself. Each member of the audience was once, in germ and in fantasy, such an Oedipus." Quoted in Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, "Oedipus and Psyche," *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 15, no. 4 (1999), p. 465.

129. Carla J. Ferstman and J. C. Smith, *Castration of Oedipus: Feminism, Psychoanalysis, and the Will to Power* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 31.

contest the Oedipal bifurcation of thought (mother/father, self/other, female/male, etc.) is to challenge the symbolic order itself, to disrupt the "dominant fiction" upon which our entire social system is based.[130] There is an anti-Oedipal impulse, however, that dates back as far as recorded thought and is personified in the figure of Dionysus. Valuing multiplicity over division, proliferation over lack, fluidity over stasis, and mutability over categorization, this mode of thought follows a trajectory from the ecstatic philosophy of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche to the sociopolitical critique of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, with detours in the writings of the Marquis de Sade and J. G. Ballard (to name only some of the most illustrative examples). In place of the Oedipal triangulation of "papa, mama, me," which institutes an immutable sensibility of "either/or," Deleuze and Guattari introduce the notion of an undifferentiated "body without organs."[131] This is a body of pure sensation that is at one with the world. Pregenital, prelingual, and entirely self-encapsulated in a utopian realm of pure drive, the "body without organs" is self-generated and, therefore, free from paternal authority.[132] Deleuze and Guattari write,

> The body without organs is an egg: it is crisscrossed with axes and thresholds, with latitudes and longitudes and geodesic lines, traversed by gradients marking the transitions and becomings, the destinations of the subject developing along these particular vectors. Nothing here is representative; rather is all life and lived experience . . . [like the] predestined zone in the egg . . . that is going to be simulated to produce within itself. Nothing but bands of intensity, potentials, thresholds, and gradients.[133]

In psychoanalytic terms, a rejection of the Oedipal complex constitutes a refusal to move beyond the state of primary infantile narcissism in which the subject remains fixed in pregenital unity. The sequential fantasies of the complex—maternal seduction (in order to recover the original sense of oneness), paternal aggression (in order to eliminate competition), and paternal identification (as a resolution to the conflict)—never occur, because the subject feels no separation from his or her mother. According to Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel, "The narcissistic state is fantasized as identical in nature to the fusion between the infant and its mother on the model of the intrauterine situation."[134] The antithesis of Oedipal development is perversion, which is marked by the regressive compulsion to eschew normative sexual maturation by privileging the anal stage over the genital. Abandoning Oedipus means embracing the anal-sadistic universe: the delirious realm of undifferentiation imagined by the *Cremaster* cycle.

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130. The term "dominant fiction" is used by Kaja Silverman in arguing that the ideology necessary for the constitution of male identity (i.e., classic masculinity) is the equation between the phallus, as (Lacanian) symbol of power, and the penis. This ideology, she believes, is operative at the deepest psychological level and is perpetuated by the Oedipus complex. See Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (New York and London: Routledge, 1992), p. 16.

131. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, pp. 9–16.

132. "The full body without organs is produced as antiproduction, that is to say it intervenes in the process as such for the sole purpose of rejecting any attempt to impose on it any sort of triangulation implying that it was produced by parents. How could this body be produced by parents, when by its very nature it is such an eloquent witness of its own self-production, of its own engendering of itself?" Ibid., p. 15.

133. Ibid., p. 19.

134. Chasseguet-Smirgel, *Creativity and Perversion*, p. 27.

While the different story lines of Barney's *Cremaster* films adhere to the structure of the quest-narrative, with their primary character(s) enduring various tests of will, the artist's theme, in the end, is profoundly anti-Oedipal. But this is not immediately apparent, for—in another masterful appropriation of genre—the project wears Oedipus's cloak. All of Barney's (male) protagonists—Gary Gilmore, the Entered Apprentice, the Loughton Candidate, and the tripartite Diva/Magician/Giant—undergo a rite of passage through which they must overcome physical and emotional constraints. The tournament staged in the Guggenheim in *Cremaster 3*—the Masonic game called "the Order"—is a microcosm of this cycle-wide motif; it allegorizes each *Cremaster* episode as a specific obstacle—like the Sphinx of ancient Thebes, the monster slain by Oedipus—that the Entered Apprentice must defeat. In the cycle itself the lure of the feminine materializes as one of the challenges faced by the primary characters. As it is dramatized, however, it emerges as less an impediment to be removed than an energy to be absorbed. Gilmore murders out of frustrated passion for Nicole Baker, then seeks release through gender metamorphosis. The Entered Apprentice, the cycle's most narcissistic character, becomes and then slays his female alter ego (who, as an Egyptian cat, invokes the mysterious Sphinx). The Loughton Candidate crawls through the vaginal tunnel under the Isle of Man searching for an option beyond the "either/or" of differentiation. And the Magician, Diva, and Giant seem to exist only as extensions of the Queen's sorrow; they are held captive in her reverie.

The patriarchal side of the Oedipal triangle finds form at various points in the cycle; the Houdini/Mailer/Gilmore axis, for instance, is one of the more overt examples of paternal authority. It is the presence of Serra in *Cremaster 3*, however, that most aggressively suggests the "anxiety of influence" associated with Oedipal conflict.[135] His role as Hiram Abiff or the Architect, foil to Barney's Entered Apprentice, and his cameo appearance in the Order—as himself, at the pinnacle of the Guggenheim's rotunda—establish a "father figure" against which the artist must rail. It is tempting to read *Cremaster 3*, with its biographical allusions, as a personal meditation on the tyranny of artistic influence. Identification with the father (as the successful resolution of the Oedipal complex) would mean adherence to a certain school or style. The murder of the father would indicate freedom from comparison and aesthetic categorization.

That this is of course a simplistic reading of Barney's epic project does not make it entirely untrue, but the artist inhabits the Oedipal narrative only in order to invert many of its terms. In *Cremaster 3*, for instance, Barney does not kill off the paternal figure of Serra as much as he ingests it, making the sculptor's vocabulary consonant with his own.[136] In this way, Mailer, Serra,

135. In his book *The Anxiety of Influence*, a study of artistic lineage, Harold Bloom proposes a theory of literature premised on Oedipal conflict, asking how a young poet can avoid repetition and overcome the domination of "ghostly fathers." See Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 88.

136. This is one way to read the dental-office sequence in *Cremaster 3*: though rendered as an allegory of Masonic initiation rites grafted onto a gangster-film scenario of betrayal and retribution, the scene also alludes to fundamental psychological conflict. The paternal figure of the Architect may have ordered the removal of the Apprentice's teeth (a symbol of castration, according to Freud) and then their replacement, but it is the Apprentice who actually creates something through this process. He ingests and expels his broken teeth, which coalesce to form a perfect porcelain rod that Barney has described as "the internalization and idealization of the paternal phallus." Barney, correspondence with the author, January 2, 2002. For more on the symbolism of teeth, see Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, 1900, English trans. and ed. James Strachey (New York: Anchor Books, 1965), pp. 420–28.

Dave Lombardo, and even Ursula Andress become as much a part of the *Cremaster* cosmology as Houdini and the Queen of Chain. In his adoption and subversion of Oedipal thought, Barney complicates its binary structure. "Female" and "male" strains are clearly operative in the *Cremaster* organism, but they give rise to unexpected behaviors. The "feminine" character zones, Goodyear and the Queen of Chain, are in control of their narratives. Unlike the Sphinx, who appears only as a character in someone else's story, they have ultimate agency; they direct the choreography of their being. The "masculine" character zones, whose protagonists progress from candidacy to apotheosis, allude to an outcome very different from that prescribed by Oedipal development, which privileges the genital over the anal or oral stages. On the biological level, these characters either have miniscule, amorphous penises or lack them entirely. Their anatomy points toward the "male" by scrotum alone. As "bodies without organs," they hover on the edge of gender identification, propose the possibility of self-generation, and imagine a space without difference. These perverse creatures are successfully unformed; their testes are tethered with the cords of pure potential.

SCULPTURAL DIMENSIONS

The *Cremaster* cycle is a counter-myth. Experimental and open-ended, it narrates the story of a subject who exists outside of language—at least outside our rationalistic language premised on the dichotomies of presence and absence, and by extension on all bipolar thought. It is fitting, therefore, that Barney's epic project is predominantly and emphatically visual.[137] All five films together contain approximately ten lines of spoken dialogue. The narrative is almost purely imagistic; it progresses from one scene to another through a network of signifiers that connect on a purely poetic level, with grapes becoming dancers, a car becoming dentures, a tire becoming testicles, and so on. The slippage between seemingly dissimilar elements—as if lubricated by Barney's signature Vaseline—serves to reveal a fundamental elasticity of meaning. It strikes against dualistic analysis and categorization premised on opposition. As one metaphor signifies another, and another, in a spherical chain of allusion, the *Cremaster* cycle rehearses a perpetual collapse of (sexual) difference.[138]

This circular chain unfolds not just cinematically but also through the drawings, photographs, sculptures, installations, and books produced in conjunction with each *Cremaster* episode. These elements radiate outward from the narrative core of every installment, as if moving with centrifugal force out of each film's image bank. There are no ancillary components. The photographs—framed in the artist's signature plastic and often arranged in

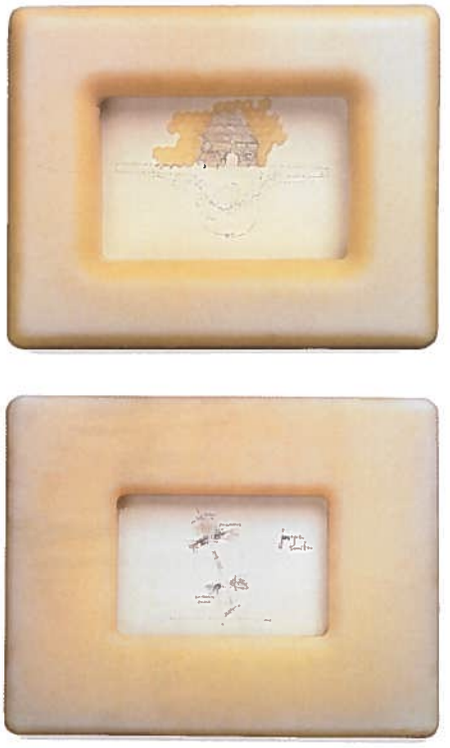
137. This is not to discount the importance of the films' soundtracks and musical scores. It is intended, rather, to underscore the fact that the narrative project is to a large extent bereft of the spoken word.

138. This interpretation is drawn from Roland Barthes's Structuralist reading of Bataille's 1926 novel *Histoire de l'oeil*. Barthes sees all of Bataille's spherical metaphors—eye, sun, egg, testicles—as grid coordinates to metaphors of fluidity, tears, yolk, and semen. The two axes of the grid meet to produce impossible but profoundly resonant images such as "the urinary liquefaction of the sky." According to Bois and Krauss, "The action of the grid is not only to set up the factitiousness of every term (the fact that none could have a point of origin in the real world and thus none could serve as the story's privileged term, the one that provides it with its ultimate sense); it is also to declare each term as sexually impossible, the result of a continual collapse of sexual difference, as the grid works to produce the eye as a kind of round phallus." They quote Barthes: "He thus leaves no other recourse than to consider, in *Histoire de l'oeil*, a perfectly spherical metaphor: each of the terms is always a signifier of another (no term is a simple signified), without our ever being able to stop the chain." Sée Bois and Krauss, *Formless*, p. 155.

diptychs and triptychs that distill moments from the plot—chronicle the films' characters, chorusés, animals, and settings. Large in format and lushly colored, they are not generally film stills, moments frozen from the cinematic narrative. Instead of attempting to emulate the cinematic within a static image, as does so much photo-based contemporary art today, they are formally posed shots taken on location, and underscore the essentially photographic condition of film. Their reference could be Hollywood celebrity portraiture in the tradition of George Hurrell, who produced entirely constructed images crafted to promote or commemorate both particular films and individual stars.[139]

The entire *Cremaster* cycle is permeated by drawing. From their position as conceptual studies in Barney's detailed storyboards, drawings delineate the films' thematic flow. As montages of clippings, sketches, maps, and other found materials, the storyboards are in any case preliminary drawings in themselves. Within the films, too, certain characters produce "drawings in space," which are, in essence, sculptural: Goodyear's diagrams translate into the forms of precision dancing; Gilmore renders a landscape in Vaseline; the Architect sketches his own hubris in the shape of a building; the Ascending and Descending Hacks demarcate the circulatory system of the Isle of Man; and the Diva traces a threshold between reality and illusion on the proscenium arch of his stage. Each episode also generates finished works on paper—framed pencil drawings, often accentuated with dabs of Vaseline—that represent key aspects of the project's conceptual framework. These are reproduced along with photographic portraits and film stills in the books Barney creates to accompany each installment.

It is impossible to separate the aesthetic components constituting the *Gesamtkunstwerk* of Barney's *Cremaster* cycle. Collectively they mold an intricate, multidimensional artwork that is sculptural in form. The artist describes himself as a sculptor and considers the overarching sensibility of his five-part epic to be sculptural. Even the storyboards for the individual films wrap around the walls of his studio, compelling viewers to walk through each narrative construct. Barney's camerawork—recording character zones, settings, and objects—also contributes to the three-dimensionality of the *Cremaster* universe. He literally sculpts with cinematography, reinforcing the narrative thrust of each film with the movement of the camera. The aerial shots in *Cremaster 1*, while mimicking Berkeley's signature crane views, accentuate the sensations of buoyancy imagined in a utopian realm of undifferentiation or full ascension. In *Cremaster 2*, the camera continuously zooms in and out, in a perpetual rhythm that embodies the looping chronology of the story, which moves forward in order to revert backward, like the course of the slowly retreating glacier fields. The camera traces a vertical



Drawings from *The Drones' Exposition*, 1999

139. George Hurrell had a long career as a still photographer for such studios as MGM, Warner Brothers, and Columbia. Barney similarly art-directs his photographs but, unlike Hurrell, he does not take them. For the *Cremaster* cycle he has collaborated with photographers Michael James O'Brien (*Cremasters 1, 2, 4,* and *5*) and Chris Winget (*Cremasters 2* and *3*). O'Brien's background in fashion photography perfectly suited the celebrity portrait sensibility.

Goodyear Field, 1996

trajectory in *Cremaster 3*, using a boom to glide ever upward to reflect the ascending narrative in the Chrysler Building while it is being erected. In *Cremaster 4* the camera diagrams the topographical circulatory system of the Isle of Man. Positioned at the level of the Hacks' sidecars, it reveals the enclosed, tubelike nature of the racecourse, which consists of miles of narrow, curving hedge-lined roads. To track the Loughton Candidate's underground journey, Barney used lipstick cameras on pole extensions that followed his gyrations through the tunnel, simulating the passage of an endoscope through the bowels and lower intestine.[140] Sweeping circular motions dominate the camerawork in *Cremaster 5*, echoing the shape of the opera house and the pools of the Gellért Baths below. These visual rings extend outward from and return to the Queen of Chain, whose lamentation accompanies and/or imagines the fate of full descension.

Within each film Barney designs and constructs virtually every element, from the microcosmic, such as the crystal sphere at the tip of the water sprites' clitoral penis in *Cremaster 5*, to the macrocosmic, such as the full-scale replica of the Chrysler Building's Art Deco lobby. Every facet contributes to the symbolic matrix of the whole; not a detail goes unnoticed or fails to signify. It can be as frivolous as the little field emblems embossed in the foam in the glasses of Guinness during the bar scene in *Cremaster 3* or as monumental as the cast-salt beehives of the rodeo arena in *Cremaster 2*. All of the films' sculptural components—prosthetics, furniture, costumes—bear content that drives the narrative forward. In *Cremaster 5*, for instance, the

140. Barney, correspondence with the author, January 2, 2002.

The Isle of Man, 1994–95

Queen of Chain's gown—a rigid plastic construction cast directly on Andress's body—dictates her very (limited) movements, contributing to the overall effect of mournful languor.[141]

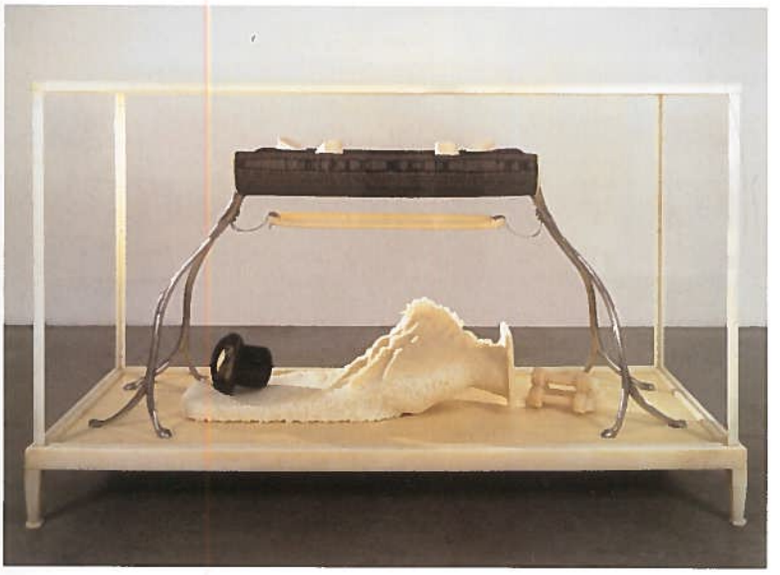
Each episode of the cycle has engendered discrete sculptures, elements of which play highly visible roles in the films. These are not cinematic relics or props but hybrid three-dimensional incarnations of the characters and settings. They exist separately from the films but carry the same content, which is now expressed in space rather than in time. The main sculptures and installations—all produced after their respective film is completed—re-present key architectural moments in the narrative. From *Cremaster 1* Barney fashioned *Goodyear Field* (1996), which amalgamates separate zones of potential, one of preparation, the other of performance: the white table under which Goodyear perches and the blue Astroturf arena. The table is surrounded by the dancers' white-plastic conical hats, out of which spill ovals of cast tapioca. A starburst of high-heeled shoes can be glimpsed under the table, on which a taut speculum holds open the aperture through which Goodyear obtains her grapes. A confection of a sculpture, *Goodyear Field* embodies the essential story line of the film through its architectural references and decorative flourishes. *The Isle of Man* (1994–95) is a sculptural installation that similarly conflates distinct segments of *Cremaster 4*: a monumental vinyl-covered block separates two sloping ramps—which, in the film, hold the Ascending and Descending Hacks—from a mirrored vanity. An abstracted sculptural notation of crinolines (representing those worn by the

141. Barney actually cast three versions of Andress's dress: one for standing, one for sitting, and one for lying down.

Lánchíd: The Lament of the Queen of Chain, 1997

fairies during their fete on a bluff overlooking the ocean) slides off the ledge of the vanity table; and a tunnel burrows through the block from one side to the other, metaphorically connecting the beginning of the film, and the Loughton Candidate's reverie in front of the mirror, to the final scene of the pierced scrotum. It is as if the entire narrative had occurred only in his dreams of fusion and self-discipline. Two other sculptures from *Cremaster 4* reference the triad of fairies whose presence in the film mirrors the conflicting forces at work without any of the emotional or physical friction experienced by the Candidate or the Hacks. *[PITCH] Field of the Ascending Faerie* (1995) is a reincarnation of the yellow mat on which the fairies stage their picnic competition. Complete with thermos and tartan-bordered, antique lace cloth, the square field holds the energy of its absent performers. *[PIT] Field of the Descending Faerie* (1995), constructed from prosthetic plastic, digs directly into the floor, half-burying the hydraulic jack/thermos used in the film to prop up one of the sidecars for a tire change.

The primary sculpture from *Cremaster 5, Lánchíd: The Lament of the Queen of Chain* (1997), is a portrait of the Queen that in a way encapsulates the entire film, since all of its imagery flows forth from her mind and the deepest recesses of her body. Entirely transparent, the piece is an acrylic-and-polyurethane cast of the underwater stairway inhabited by the Gellért sprites. It is topped by identical pillow-thrones—here clear as crystal—which mirror one another at either end of the structure. Flanked on either side by free-standing black walls, the staircase transmutes into a stage, upon which the



The Cabinet of Baby Fay La Foe, 2000

fantasies of descension may be remembered. The spirit of the Magician is embodied in the installation entitled *The Ehrich Weiss Suite* (1997), an enclosed room containing a photographic triptych showing the Queen's two ushers on either side of the embracing couple; a sculptural black-acrylic reliquary holding the Magician's prosthetic plastic shackles and a glass scepter; a black framed drawing; and seven live Jacobin pigeons. Sealed from the public and visible only through a glass door, this funereal chamber evokes the Magician's hermetic state—self-enclosed but imbued with potential, a condition suggested by the presence of the white, ruffle-collared birds living in the space.

As the cycle progressed chronologically, and each film became exponentially more complex and sophisticated, the amount of sculpture increased accordingly.[142] In its constellation of related drawings, photographs, and banners, *Cremaster 4* has three sculptures. For *Cremaster 1* Barney produced only *Goodyear Field*. *Cremaster 5*, in addition to its crystal staircase/stage, generated two other large installations: *Proscenium* (1997), a hall of banners covered with black satin and synthetic calla lilies, and *The Ehrich Weiss Suite*. And *Cremaster 2*, the fourth completed episode, spawned an outpouring of sculpture. Each of the characters—Baby Fay La Foe, Nicole Baker, Johnny Cash (the Man in Black), Frank and Bessie Gilmore, Gary Gilmore, and Houdini—was assigned his or her own vitrine, which houses specific attributes and sculptural codes for the individual depicted. *The Cabinet of Baby Fay La Foe* (2000), for instance, is a large Plexiglas case containing the

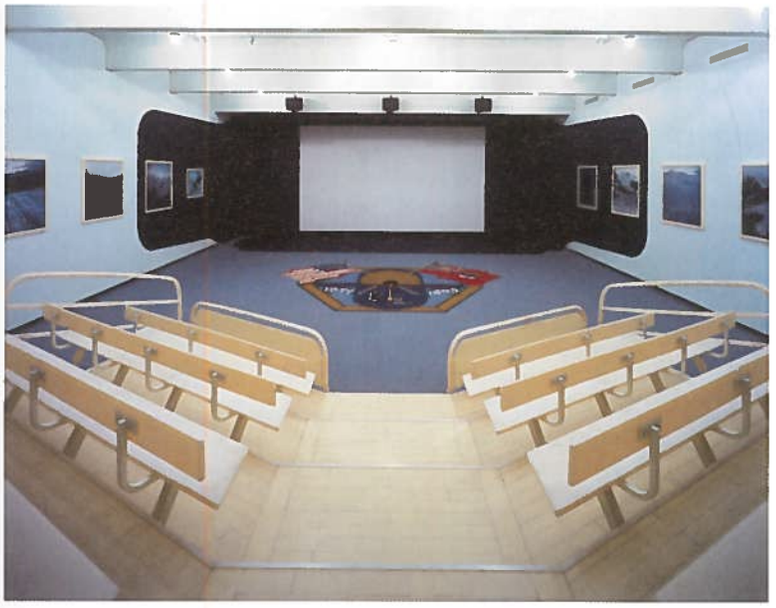
142. At this writing the *Cremaster* cycle is not yet complete, in that the sculptures and photographs for *Cremaster 3* are currently in process, but they, too, relate directly to key architectural elements and lead characters in the film: a frozen cast-Vaseline bar; a piano filled with poured concrete; Hiram Abiff's stacked columns; the cast-plastic ram with bagpipe drones; and the cast-Vaseline chassis of five 1967 Chrysler Imperials.

The Drones' Exposition, 1999 (antechamber)

character's sinuous séance table, which is constructed from black polycarbonate honeycomb and stainless steel. Split along the top into two symmetrical halves, the table is an abstraction of the natal cleft, which, according to Barney, is a residual line left over from primary cell division that is manifested on the body in the V-shape on the top of the lips or the triangle at the base of the spine. Baby Fay's top hat, here filled with honeycomb, rests on a bed of salt crystal cast in the form of a mountain range. *The Cabinet of Gary Gilmore and Nicole Baker* (1999–2000) comprises two adjacent vitrines containing the front seats of their respective Mustangs enclosed in a beeswax cast of the car exteriors. The sterling silver bell used by Baby Fay in the séance/conception scene, and worn by the Brahman bull in the rodeo/execution sequence, rests on the floor between them. Cast salt crystals spill out from the interior. Bessie Gilmore's portrait vitrine contains the transparent crystal corset she wears during the séance/conception scene, and Houdini's cabinet consists of the woven polypropylene trunk out of which he escapes during the Columbian Exposition; cast salt barbells fall from its now empty interior. Though morphologically related to the vitrines Barney creates to exhibit the special-edition video disks he produces for each film,[143] these cabinets more closely reference the nineteenth-century natural history museum, whose display cases house a variety of taxonomic specimens: butterflies, seashells, fossils, preserved organs, isolated body parts, etc. The extended Gilmore clan is similarly objectified and presented here as a marvel or curiosity that just might reveal the secrets of the empirical world.

In addition to the portrait cabinets and a beeswax sculpture entitled *Deseret: The Drone's Gate* (1999–2000) that encloses the model of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir like a hive, Barney also produced an environmental-scale installation that collapses the entire narrative of *Cremaster 2* into one integrated sculpture. Entitled *The Drones' Exposition* (1999), the piece consists of two discrete spaces. The first is an antechamber containing a cast-plastic, wall-mounted cupboard that echoes the one that appears in the séance episode and is filled with salt dumbbells. Across from it hang flags embroidered with the Hebrew names of the Lost Tribes of Israel. The mirrored saddle seen in the opening sequence of the film and during the two-step dance number is inverted and suspended from the ceiling on a rotating pole. The silver rod used to confirm Gary Gilmore's death in the execution/rodeo episode rests on the floor as a reference to the symbolic landscape; its prone position indicating the level surface of the salt flats. Lying in front of a cast-salt mountain range, the rod points back toward the retreating glacier field that created the topography featured in the film and the genealogical movement of the narrative. A selection of five framed drawings rounds out the ensemble. The landscape theme continues in the installation's main

143. The films are distributed in editions of ten, with two artist's proofs. Although copies are available for screenings, the edition allows individuals and cultural institutions actually to own the film and the special vitrine that houses it.



The Drones' Exposition, 1999 (theater)

space with a suite of twelve color photographs of the Columbia Icefield. This room is a theater, where the film itself is projected; acrylic stadium seating rises above a carpet bearing the *Cremaster 2* emblem, and fabric padding cut in the shape of Barney's field emblem frames the movie screen. At once cinema, rodeo, vaudeville hall, and execution chamber, this installation brings the symbiotic relationship between sculpture and film in Barney's art into full relief. It shows how space can be narrated and celluloid sculpted. Its transposition of one form into another, in a Möbius strip of possible meanings, is a mirror to the movement of the project as a whole. The *Cremaster* cycle is in perpetual motion, it is searching for an ending, which it may find only in its beginning—that brief instant of pure equilibrium that just might have been an illusion.

FULL CAPTIONS FOR TEXT ILLUSTRATIONS

2. Production photograph from *CREMASTER 4*, 1994

4. (top) *HYPERTROPHY (incline)*, 1991
Light-reflective vinyl, graphite, and petroleum jelly in paper on internally lubricated plastic
26.2 x 29.3 x 3.1 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of R.L.B. Tobin

4. (bottom) *Drawing Restraint II*, 1988
Action/installation, artist's studio, Yale University
Photo: Michael Rees

5. (top) *Drawing Restraint II*, 1988
Action/installation, artist's studio, Yale University
Photo: Michael Rees

5. (bottom) *Drawing Restraint II (document)*, 1988 (detail)
Plastic, photographs, graphite, and crayon on paper with magnesium carbonate wedge and toe-clip strap
40.6 x 45.7 x 45.7 cm
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase, with funds from the Drawing Committee

6. (top) *Condition 88*, 1988
Ink and graphite on paper with prosthetic plastic frame
39.4 x 39.4 x 1.9 cm
Collection of Leopoldo Villareal

6. (bottom) *unit BOLUS*, 1991
Cast petroleum jelly 8-lb. dumbbell, stainless steel, and electronic freezing device
71.2 x 45.8 x 25.4 cm
Edition of 5

7. *FIELD DRESSING (orifill)*, 1989
Stills from videoaction, two-channel color video, 00:09:15, 00:25:14
Collection of the artist
Videography: Michael Rees

8. *BLIND PERINEUM* from *[facility of DECLINE]*, 1991
Still from videoaction, color video, 01:17:05
Videography: Peter Strietmann

9. *TRANSEXUALIS*, 1991 (interior)
Walk-in cooler, formed and cast petroleum-jelly decline bench, human chorionic gonadotrophin, silicon-gel pectoral form, and two videos with equipment, two monitors (with brackets), two laser-disk players, and two laser-disk loops
366 x 427 x 259 cm
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Accessions Committee Fund, gift of Collectors Forum, Byron R. Meyer, Norah and Norman Stone, and Mr. and Mrs. Brooks Walter, Jr.

10. *TRANSEXUALIS (decline)*, 1991 (interior and detail)
Walk-in cooler, formed and cast petroleum-jelly incline bench, human chorionic gonadotrophin, speculum, silicon-gel pectoral form, and two videos with equipment, two monitors (with brackets), two laser-disk players, and two laser-disk loops
366 x 427 x 259 cm
Astrup Fearnley Collection, Oslo

11. *HYPOTHERMAL PENETRATOR*, 1991
Signed black-and-white photograph in prosthetic plastic frame
39.4 x 34.9 x 3.1 cm
Edition of 2

12. *MILE HIGH Threshold: FLIGHT with the ANAL SADISTIC WARRIOR* from *[facility of INCLINE]*, 1991
Still from videoaction, color video, 00:41:42
Videography: Peter Strietmann

14. *REPRESSIA*, 1991 (detail)
Wrestling mat, Pyrex, cast petroleum-jelly and wax Olympic curl bar, socks, sternal retractor, skeet, saltwater pearl, petroleum jelly, and two videos with equipment, two monitors (with brackets), two laser-disk players, and two laser-disk loops
427 x 549 x 381 cm
Collection of Norman and Norah Stone, San Francisco; Courtesy of Thea Westreich, Art Advisory Services, New York

14. (right) *[facility of INCLINE]* showing *REPRESSIA*, 1991
Installation, Stuart Regen Gallery, Los Angeles, 1991

15. (top) *DELAY OF GAME (manual A)*, 1991 (detail)
Gelatin-silver print and petroleum jelly in internally lubricated plastic frame
38.1 x 33 x 2.5 cm
Edition of 2
Photo: Michael Joaquin Grey

15. (bottom) *RADIAL DRILL*, 1991
Production photograph from videoaction, color, black-and-white video, 00:04:59
Photo: Michael Joaquin Grey

16. *OTTOshaft*, 1992
Three-channel color video installation; *OTTOshaft*, 00:08:54; *OTTOdrone*, 00:18:47; *AUTOdrone*, 00:02:02
From top image, left to right: three video stills, *OTTOdrone*; production still, *OTTOshaft*; video still, *OTTOdrone*; three video stills, *AUTOdrone*
Videography and Photo: Peter Strietmann
Tate. Presented by the Patrons of New Art through the Tate Gallery Foundation, 1994

20. Concept drawing for *OTTOshaft*, 1992

22. Production photograph from *Drawing Restraint 7*, 1993
Three-channel color video installation; *Spin*, 00:02:20; *Curl*, 00:02:55; *Draw*, 00:03:30
Videography: Peter Strietmann
Photo: Michael James O'Brien

23. *Drawing Restraint 7*, 1993
Video stills from *Draw*

26–29. Artist's conceptual mapping of the *CREMASTER* cycle, showing locations, ca. 1994
Left to right: Two photographs, Bronco Stadium, Boise State University, Idaho; photograph, Bonneville Salt Flats, Utah; photograph, Great Salt Lake, Utah; postcard, Athabasca Glacier, Columbia Icefield, Canada
Left to right: Two postcards, Chrysler Building, New York; postcard, Calf of Man/Isle of Man; postcard, Gellért Baths, Budapest; concept drawing

31. *CREMASTER 1: The Goodyear Waltz*, 1995 (detail)
C-print in self-lubricating plastic frame
85.7 x 70 x 2.5 cm
Edition of 3, 2 A.P.

32. *CREMASTER 1: Red Lounge Manual*, 1995
3 gelatin-silver prints in self-lubricating plastic frames
Center: 52 x 67.3 x 2.5 cm; left and right: 56 x 67.3 x 2.5 cm each
Edition of 3, 1 A.P.

34. Video still from *CREMASTER 1*, 1995

35. *CREMASTER 2: Genealogy*, 1999
3 C-prints in acrylic frames
Center: 71.1 x 60.3 x 2.5 cm; left and right: 55.2 x 55.2 x 2.5 cm each
Edition of 3, 2 A.P.

36. *CREMASTER 2: The Man in Black*, 1999
C-print in acrylic frame (shown unframed)
135.3 x 109.2 x 2.5 cm
Edition of 6, 2 A.P.

37. *The Cabinet of the Man in Black*, 1999
Bridal satin, beaver felt, beeswax, petroleum jelly, nylon, and *Billboard* magazine in nylon and acrylic vitrine
101 x 121.3 x 95.6 cm
Collection of Peggy and Ralph Burnet

38. Video still from *CREMASTER 2*, 1999

39. Production photograph from *CREMASTER 2*, 1999

40–41. Video stills from *CREMASTER 2*, 1999

42. *CREMASTER 3: The Song of The Vertical Field*, 2002 (detail)
1 of 2 C-prints in acrylic frames (shown unframed)
106.7 x 86.4 x 3.8 cm
Edition of 3, 1 A.P.

44. Production photograph from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

45. Video still from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

46. (top) *CREMASTER 3: Imperial New Yorker*, 2002 (detail)
1 of 3 C-prints in acrylic frames (shown unframed)
86.4 x 106.7 x 3.8 cm
Edition of 3, 1 A.P.

46. (bottom) Production photograph from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

47–50. Video stills from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

51. (top) Production photograph from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

51. (bottom) Video still from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

52. Video stills from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

53. *CREMASTER 3: The Dance of Hiram Abiff*, 2002 (detail)
1 of 4 C-prints in acrylic frames (shown unframed)
106.7 x 86.4 x 3.8 cm
Edition of 3, 2 A.P.

54. Production stills from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

55–58. Video stills from *CREMASTER 3*, 2002

59. *CREMASTER 4: VALVE*, 1994 (detail)
1 of 4 C-prints in self-lubricating plastic frames (shown unframed)
84.5 x 70 x 3.8 cm
Edition of 3, 1 A.P.

60. *CREMASTER 4: FAERIE FIELD*, 1994
4 C-prints in self-lubricating plastic frames
left to right: 44.5 x 32.4 x 3.8 cm, 70 x 84.5 x 3.8 cm, 44.5 x 32.4 x 3.8 cm, 44.5 x 32.4 x 3.8 cm
Edition of 3, 1 A.P.

61. (top) *PITCH: The Field of the Ascending HACK*, 1994
Graphite, lacquer, and petroleum jelly on paper, Manx tartan, and thread in prosthetic plastic frame
31.8 x 31.8 x 5.1 cm
Private Collection, New York

61. (center) Video still from *CREMASTER 4*, 1994

61. (bottom) Production photograph from *CREMASTER 4*, 1994

62. *CREMASTER 4: Gob ny Creggan Glassey*, 1994 (details)
2 C-prints in prosthetic plastic frames
43.2 x 48.3 x 2.5 cm each
Edition of 3, 1 A.P.

63. (top) *CREMASTER 4: ↑↔↓*, 1994 (detail)
1 of 3 C-prints in self-lubricating plastic frames (shown unframed)
Left: 42 x 49.5 x 3.8 cm; center and right: 49.5 x 42 x 3.8 cm
Edition of 6, 1 A.P.

63. (bottom) Production still from *CREMASTER 4*, 1994

64. *CREMASTER 4: Field of the Ascending Faerie*, 1994
2 C-prints in self-lubricating plastic frames
Top: 60 x 76.2 x 2.5 cm; bottom: 66 x 56 x 2.5 cm
Edition of 6, 1 A.P.

66–68. Video stills from *CREMASTER 5*, 1997

69. (top) *CREMASTER 5: Elválás*, 1997 (detail)
1 gelatin-silver print in acrylic frame (shown unframed)
105.1 x 87.6 x 2.5 cm
Edition of 6, 1 A.P.

69. (bottom) Video still from *CREMASTER 5*, 1997

70. *CREMASTER 5: A Dance for the Queen's Menagerie*, 1997 (detail)
1 of 7 C-prints in acrylic frames
137.2 x 110.5 x 2.5 cm
Edition of 2, 1 A.P.

71–72. Video stills from *CREMASTER 5*, 1997

74–75. (left to right, two views each) *CREMASTER 1*, 1995–96
Silkscreened laser disk, cast polyester, prosthetic plastic, and patent vinyl in self-lubricating plastic and acrylic vitrine
91 x 122 x 130 cm
Edition of 10, 2 A.P.

CREMASTER 2, 1999
Silkscreened digital video disk, nylon, tooled saddle leather, sterling silver, beeswax, and polycarbonate honeycomb in nylon and acrylic vitrine, with 35-mm print
104.1 x 119.4 x 99.1 cm
Edition of 10, 2 A.P.

CREMASTER 3, 2002
2 silkscreened digital video disks, stainless steel, internally lubricated plastic, marble, and sterling silver in acrylic vitrine, with 35-mm print
110.5 x 119.4 x 101.6 cm
Edition of 10, 2 A.P.

CREMASTER 4, 1994–95
Silkscreened laser disk in onionskin sleeve, prosthetic plastic, bridal satin banner, and Manx tartan in self-lubricating plastic and acrylic vitrine
91.4 x 122 x 104.1 cm
Edition of 10, 2 A.P.

CREMASTER 5, 1997
Silkscreened laser disk, polyester, acrylic, velvet, and sterling silver in acrylic vitrine, with 35-mm print
88.9 x 119.4 x 94 cm
Edition of 10, 2 A.P.

83. Drawings from *The Drones' Exposition*, 1999
Graphite and petroleum jelly on paper in nylon frames
Top: 20 x 25.1 x 4.4 cm
Bottom: 23.5 x 30 x 3 cm
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art through the Accessions Committee Fund, 2000

84. *Goodyear Field*, 1996
Self-lubricating plastic, prosthetic plastic, petroleum jelly, silicone, Astroturf, pearlescent vinyl, cast tapioca, cast polyester, polyester ribbon, costume pearls, speculae, and Pyrex
1.37 x 6.81 x 8.23 m overall
Emmanuel Hoffmann Foundation, On permanent loan to Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Basel

85. *The Isle of Man*, 1994–95
2 600cc sidehacks, wrestling mat, vinyl, silicone, tapioca, polyester, petroleum jelly, internally lubricated plastic, prosthetic plastic, fluorescent light, mirror, satin ribbon, and Manx tartan
4.29 x 5.64 x 7.9 m overall
Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam

86. *Lanchid: The Lament of the Queen of Chain*, 1997
Acrylic, cast polyurethane, Vivak, Pyrex, polyethylene, and prosthetic plastic
3.05 x 6.1 x 4.88 m
Astrup Fearnley Collection, Oslo

87. *The Cabinet of Baby Fay La Foe*, 2000
Polycarbonate honeycomb, cast stainless steel, nylon, solar salt cast in epoxy resin, top hat, and beeswax in nylon and acrylic vitrine
150 x 242.6 x 97.2 cm
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Committee on Painting and Sculpture Funds

88. *The Drones' Exposition*, 1999 (antechamber)
35-mm film (color digital video transferred to film with Dolby SR sound); 2-part sculpture installation: nylon, acrylic, steel, salt, solar salt cast in epoxy resin, chrome-plated engraved brass, leather, sterling silver, brass, lead, Hungarian sidesaddle, carpet, carpet inlay, and quilted nylon; 12 silk flags with 12 nylon poles and 1 wall mount; 5 drawings: graphite and petroleum jelly on paper in nylon frames; and 12 C-prints in acrylic frames
Overall dimensions variable
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, T. B. Walker Acquisition Fund and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art through the Accessions Committee Fund, 2000

89. *The Drones' Exposition*, 1999 (theater)

MATTHEW BARNEY

THE CREMASTER CYCLE

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Opening and closing sequences: *Goodyear Gates*, 1997 (detail)
The Drones' Exposition, 1999 (detail)
Crown Imperial, 2002 (detail)
Quocunque Jeceris Stabit, 1995 (detail)
Proscenium, 1997 (detail)

Page vi: *Matthew Barney: The CREMASTER Cycle*,
Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2003 (installation view)